

THE CORNHILL



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MAGAZINE

	PAGE
BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES	v
FLORA THOMPSON (<i>Illustrated</i>) by Margaret Lane	145
THE ENTRANCE TO HADES (<i>Illustrated</i>) by Patrick Leigh Fermor	166
YOUNG MAN WITH A CAMERA (A Story) by Monica Stirling	178
IN THE LAND OF FEAST AND FAMINE (<i>Illustrated</i>) by George Whalley	191
LOVE AFFAIR (A Story) by Ira Morris	214
FOUR JAPANESE POEMS <i>translated by D. J. Enright</i> <i>and Takamichi Ninomiya</i>	222

JOHN MURRAY, 50 ALBEMARLE STREET, LONDON, W.1

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BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

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GEORGE WHALLEY was born in Canada and is Associate Professor of English in Queen's University, Kingston, Ontario. His two books, *Poetic Process* and *Coleridge and Sara Hutchinson*, were published by Routledge and Kegan Paul. He has published poems and critical articles, and written broadcast scripts for the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation and the B.B.C.

MONICA STIRLING, novelist and short-story writer, lives in France. She has written five novels, the latest being *Some Darling Folly* and a book of short stories. Another book of short stories entitled *Journeys We Shall Never Make* is to be published this spring (Gollancz). She is now working on a biography of Ouida, *The Fine and The Wicked*.

PATRICK LEIGH FERMOR. During the war he organised and commanded the operation which ambushed, captured and evacuated General Kreipe, German Commander of the Sebastopol Division in Crete. This story is told in the film *Ill-Met By Moonlight*. His book *The Traveller's Tree* was awarded the Heinemann Foundation Prize and a Kemsley Prize. *The Violins of Saint-Jacques* was first published in the CORNHILL. His book on monasteries, *A Time To Keep Silence*, will be published shortly (John Murray). He is at present working on a book on Greece.

IRA MORRIS, journalist and writer, was born in America and lives in France. He has published six novels; *Liberty Street* was an American Literary Guild Selection and his most recent *The Bombay Meeting* (Chatto and Windus) has been dramatised. He has written many short stories and has had six selected for the Best American Short Story anthologies.

D. J. ENRIGHT : born in 1920, educated at Leamington College and Downing College, Cambridge. From 1947 to 1950 he was a University lecturer in Alexandria where he achieved an Egyptian doctorate; in 1950 he joined the University of Birmingham and in 1953 he took up a teaching appointment in Konan University, Japan. His published work include *The World of Dew*, (aspects of Living Japan), and a novel, *Heaven Knows Where* (Secker and Warburg). He is shortly publishing *The Poetry of Living Japan*, edited for the Wisdom of the East Series (John Murray), which will include the poems printed in this issue of the CORNHILL.

TAKAMICHI NINOMIYA is Professor of English Literature at Kobe University.

KATSUMI TANAKA, born in 1911, educated at Tokyo University, is now a teacher and lives in Osaka.

HAKUSHŪ KITAHARA (1885-1942) was born in Kyushu. Besides his work in the modern style he wrote *Tanka*, folk poems and nursery rhymes.

KYŪKIN SUSUKIDA (1877-1945). His education was chiefly acquired in Veno Library, the largest Tokyo library of Japanese classical literature. Later he worked for the Osaka *Mainichi* newspaper.

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Snow** and **Walter Allen**, who
wrote—"I found it very
moving."

EYRE & SPOTTISWOODE

Flora Thompson

BY MARGARET LANE



FLORA THOMPSON died in 1947 at the age of seventy, a writer who had produced a minor classic in the last years of her life, and about whom very little else is generally known.

Her work is in a genre of its own not altogether easy to describe, for it falls into no obvious category. Her three books, *Lark Rise*, *Over to Candleford* and *Candleford Green*, which first appeared singly and are now published together as a trilogy under the title *Lark Rise to Candleford*, are not really novels, though fiction plays a part in them here and there. Nor are they autobiography pure and simple, for the personal element is evasive and oblique. They are better described, perhaps, as social history ; though that, again, is a misleading name to give. They are more intimate, more personal, more alive than social history is usually allowed to be, for Flora Thompson dwells on all the humble details which social historians either do not know, or else leave out. They are a simple yet infinitely detailed record of the life of the poor as it was lived in an obscure Oxfordshire hamlet in the eighteen-eighties and 'nineties ; all remembered from a child's experience ; all faithfully set down ; all true. It is as precious as a record of something that has perished, though neither far away nor long ago, as for its literary quality, and for the fact that Flora Thompson herself was a cottage child, born in poverty, who wrote with a touch of genius of the life she knew.

It was never her intention to write the story of her own life, and

Flora Thompson

though much can be gathered from her work about her childhood and youth, the rest is obscure, and has never been recorded. In its way it is a moving and remarkable story, and should, perhaps, be set down before all the circumstances are forgotten. It is a story which happily illustrates the unquenchable vigour of those strange gifts which are sometimes bestowed in the most unlikely places, and which in her case developed without education or encouragement and blossomed into fulfilment in old age. Flora Thompson wrote her long masterpiece in the last ten years of her life, between the ages of sixty and seventy ; in itself an extraordinary achievement. But when her history is known it will be seen that the whole of her life was a preparation, instinctive at first but eventually perfectly conscious and directed, to this one end.

She was born Flora Jane Timms, eldest child in the large family of a stone-mason who had settled as a young man in the hamlet of Juniper Hill, near Brackley, during the 'seventies. Her father, Albert Timms, was not a local man. He had come to Juniper from Oxford, where his father had been first a master builder, then a publican, and finally, come down in the world through 'drink, gambling and utter recklessness,' a builder's labourer. Albert Timms himself was a man of parts, whose failure in life was due to an unhappy temperament. He had served no apprenticeship to his trade (having grown up, perhaps, during the prosperous public-house period, when the future seemed assured) but he was a skilled craftsman for all that, and in his youth had had ambitions of becoming a sculptor. By the time he settled in Juniper, however, in his middle twenties, he was already soured by lack of opportunity, and made no further effort to escape from the rut in which he found himself. He worked for thirty-five years for a builder in Brackley, travelling the three miles backwards and forwards on foot between work and home and occasionally going farther afield on a building contract. In his youth he was proud of his stone-carving, and liked to remember that he had taken part in the restoration of Bath Abbey. Attempts at sculpture, too, Flora remembered ; a stone lion, a child's head, a carved spray of lilies-of-the-valley had stood about the cottage at Juniper as ornaments in the early days, but as time went on had grown dusty and disregarded, and found their way at last to the

rubbish heap, where perhaps they still lie crumbling among the nettles.

If he had been content with his lot, as the inhabitants of Juniper were constantly warned from the pulpit that it was their duty to be, his life would have been respectable and his home happy. But he was not content. He was a misfit, brooding in resentment on the unfairness of life and clinging to the belief that he came of a 'good' family. There seems to be some ground for the legend that his forbears had once belonged to a different world, for in childhood Flora could remember faded daguerreotypes of ladies in crinolines, magnificent in heavy lockets and gold bracelets, which her father cherished as proofs of former splendour, and which certainly spoke of a way of life unimaginably out of reach of the hamlet people. Poor Albert Timms was embittered by the contrast. He scorned his neighbours and comforted himself with drink, and was not liked in the village. His drinking kept him poorer than he need have been, and this, and the growing moroseness of his temper, cast a shadow and spoiled the happiness of his home. He was the only man in the hamlet, beside the publican, who was not a farm labourer, and he earned something more than the standard farming wage of ten shillings a week; but it was not much; and to the end of her life Flora remembered that it had been her mother's dearest dream to have 'thirty shillings a week, paid regular and to be depended upon.'

Her mother, Emma Timms, though she had none of her husband's pretensions, was in her way remarkable. If it was from her father that Flora inherited her uncommon sensibility, she certainly derived qualities no less valuable from her mother; a love of traditional songs and stories, a down-to-earth common sense and a dry humour, upheld by a strong, old-fashioned sense of duty. She had been a local girl, daughter of a small-holder who followed the trade of 'eggler' round the farms and villages, collecting with a pony and cart and selling his eggs in the nearby market town. Emma had gone into service at twelve years old, as they all did, and was nurse-maid at Fewcott Rectory when she married. She was small, fair and pretty, and in her years of service had learned standards of speech and manners a little above those of the cottage women. She was a hard worker, a good cook, and an excellent contriver, keeping her

Flora Thompson

children clean, well mannered and reasonably well clad against what today would seem insuperable odds. She was also a great repository of country songs and stories, and would sit by the fire of an evening with her two eldest children beside her on little stools and the latest baby on her knee, singing old ballads and songs and making up fairy tales, until their father's uncertain hand was heard on the latch, when they would be sent up the wooden stairs out of the way.

In later years Flora Thompson described her childhood as 'somewhat harsh and restricted,' but she bore no grudge, for the harshness and restriction were a part of poverty, and were common to them all. Nor, for all her sensitiveness, did she resent her mother's rough discipline, or develop emotional complications on account of it, as a more gently nurtured child, or one of a later generation might have done. 'Perhaps,' she wrote in *Lark Rise*, remembering the childish disgraces of herself and her brother, 'being of mixed birth with a large proportion of peasant blood in them, they were tougher in fibre than some. When their bottoms were soundly smacked, as they often were, their reaction was to make a mental note not to repeat the offence which had caused the smacking, rather than to lay up for themselves complexes to spoil their later lives.' This practical attitude towards experience, and total absence of affectation, was to be a constant element in Flora Thompson's nature. She was, indeed, a down-to-earth country child, made strange only by the unaccountable poetic streak in her nature, which transmuted every commonplace experience into something precious.

The hamlet, of which she knew every ditch and stone in childhood, is still, after nearly eighty years, almost unchanged; a nondescript cluster of cottages set down in an open landscape of flat fields, with nothing about it to attract the eye. Time seems to have added nothing and to have taken nothing away. The 'end house,' it is true, where Flora lived, is no longer the double cottage, thatched with straw, which it was in her day; only half of it remains, roofed with slate, and an unsightly lean-to annex has been added. But it still stands, as she described it, 'a little apart, and turning its back on its neighbours, as though about to run away into the fields.' All fields have local names, though they are seldom written down, and the big field which in Flora's childhood rippled with corn almost

Margaret Lane

to the cottage door was known as Lark Rise, from the great number of larks which nested in it, and from the fact that it was not quite as flat as the other fields. In making her slight disguises Flora Thompson stayed as near as possible to the truth. Flora becomes Laura, Edwin becomes Edmund, and the hamlet itself hides only behind the name of its biggest field. She allowed herself, here and there, to use the real names of actual places, and the enthusiast who takes the trouble to use a large-scale map can make many identifications; for such minute clues as that the beaded footstool which Mrs. Herring offered to Laura's mother "come out of Tusmore House that time the fire was," are to be found unobtrusively tucked away in the text, and the classical splendours of Tusmore's façade are as noble as ever they were when Flora knew it. 'In *Lark Rise*', she wrote in a letter towards the end of her life, 'every one of the characters lived at Juniper and were just as described, with only the names altered'; and as arguments sometimes arise as to the identity of Flora Thompson's villages and country towns, it may be as well to give her own identifications, so far as I have been able to find them, scattered here and there in a few letters. 'The real name of the hamlet is Juniper and the mother village is Cottisford. . . . Candleford is Banbury-Bicester-Buckingham, mostly Buckingham, as that is where we went on that first Sunday outing.' 'Candleford Green . . . is not Fringford, and very few of the characters are Fringford people, though there is a little of Fringford in it, with far more of a village in Surrey.' 'In *Over to Candleford* and *Candleford Green* I wrote more freely than in *Lark Rise*, and do not think I described any house or place exactly as it actually existed, excepting "Miss Lane's" post-office forge, and Shelswell Park, where I used to carry the letters.'

Cottisford (which is Fordlow, the mother village) where Flora and the hamlet children walked to school, is much the same as it was, though perhaps it looks more cheerful. In *Lark Rise* it is described as 'a little, lost, lonely place,' and we are told that 'it was a standing joke in the hamlet that a stranger had once asked the way to Fordlow after he had walked right through it.' The 'little squat church, without spire or tower,' has not changed; it is as small as a chapel-of-ease, and has not lost its solid, white-washed simplicity. The pew

Flora Thompson

where the Timms children sat (their parents rarely went to church, apart from successive baptisms and occasional funerals) is beneath the modest brass wall-tablet which is Cottisford's 1914-18 war memorial, and Edwin Timms's name, alone beneath the half-dozen other young men from Juniper and Cottisford, is last on the list. The village itself is still much less than a village ; the fields come up to the church-yard wall, and beyond the rectory, hidden in trees, the stone-built manor house and the tiny village school at the cross-roads, there is nothing but a scattered handful of cottages. The population is less than half what it was in Flora's childhood, and the school (small enough, and of a strangely wooden and impermanent appearance) has fewer children than in her day. Nowadays the children come and go by bus, but Flora Thompson and her brothers and sisters walked the three miles backwards and forwards from Juniper, from the age of five until they left school at twelve years old. She is still remembered as a thin, dark, long-legged child who was never still, a notable skipper, but in no other way remarkable. Indeed, I have heard that there was much local incredulity when, more than fifty years later, her books appeared. It stood to reason, people said, they couldn't have been written by Timms the stone-mason's girl.

What made her different from the other children who shared her experiences, but who found nothing in them significant or remarkable, was her marvellously deep focus of observation. The annals of the poor are rarely written ; they have no archives. Country churchyards are full of the bones of men and women who have lived her life and found nothing to say about it. To Flora Thompson, even in childhood, every circumstance of the life around her was portentous. Memory stored what eye and ear drank in, and she was haunted by a desire to fashion something, though it took her a lifetime to know what that something was. 'To be born in poverty,' she wrote when she was nearly seventy, 'is a terrible handicap to a writer. I often say to myself that it has taken one lifetime for me to prepare to make a start. If human life lasted two hundred years I might hope to accomplish something.'

What she did achieve was in a genre of its own, since it is rare to find a creative mind of her quality at work on the bedrock level. She was able to write the annals of the poor because she was one

Margaret Lane

of them, and because one of those strange accidents of genius which can never be explained had given her the equipment she needed. The other chronicler of village life who most readily comes to mind when one seeks for a comparison is Mary Russell Mitford, but Miss Mitford wrote, as nearly all other writers on country matters have done, from the genteel standpoint. Miss Mitford lived in a cottage, it is true, but with a difference. She surveyed her village scene with love, and succeeded in making her readers love it too ; but to do this she presented it as a delicious nosegay, the roots and earth concealed or conveniently forgotten. Flora Thompson's work is as different as the country scenes of Stanley Spencer are from one of George Morland's charming cottage interiors, or the primrose-laden fields of Birkett Foster. In hers there is no sentimentality. It was the true and the real that stirred her imagination. Her integrity was absolute, as Miss Mitford's was not, and it is this deep emotional truth which gives her work, in spite of its rigorous plainness, the bloom of poetry, so that even a pig-killing has a gruesome beauty.

' When the pig was fattened—and the fatter the better—the date of execution had to be decided upon. It had to take place some time during the first two quarters of the moon ; for, if the pig was killed when the moon was waning the bacon would shrink in cooking, and they wanted it to " plump up." The next thing was to engage the travelling pork-butcher, or pig-sticker, and, as he was a thatcher by day, he always had to kill after dark, the scene being lighted with lanterns and the fire of burning straw which at a later stage of the proceedings was to singe the bristles off the victim.

' The killing was a noisy, bloody business, in the course of which the animal was hoisted to a rough bench that it might bleed thoroughly and so preserve the quality of the meat. The job was often bungled, the pig sometimes getting away and having to be chased ; but country people of that day had little sympathy for the sufferings of animals, and men, women and children would gather round to see the sight.

' After the carcass had been singed, the pig-sticker would pull off the detachable, grisly, outer coverings of the toes, known locally as "the shoes," and fling them among the children, who scrambled for,

Flora Thompson

then sucked and gnawed them, straight from the filth of the sty and blackened by fire as they were.

'The whole scene, with its mud and blood, flaring lights and dark shadows, was as savage as anything to be seen in an African jungle. The children at the end house would steal out of bed to the window. "Look! Look! It's hell, and those are the devils," Edmund would whisper, pointing to the men tossing the burning straw with their pitchforks; but Laura felt sick and would creep back into bed and cry: she was sorry for the pig.'

'But, hidden from the children, there was another aspect of the pig-killing. Months of hard work and self-denial were brought on that night to a successful conclusion. It was a time to rejoice, and rejoice they did, with beer flowing freely and the first delicious dish of pig's fry sizzling in the frying-pan.'

That passage comes from the first chapter of *Lark Rise*. In *Over to Candleford* there is an echo of it, and again the killing of a pig, so momentous an event in a cottage family, by its depth of observation and truth carries implications of something beyond itself.

'A little later in her life came the evening after a pig-killing when she stood alone in the pantry where the dead animal hung suspended from a hook in the ceiling. Her mother was only a few feet away. . . . Out there in the wash-house they were busy and cheerful, but in the pantry where Laura stood was a dead, cold silence.'

'She had known that pig all its life. Her father had often held her over the door of its sty to scratch its back and she had pushed lettuce and cabbage stalks through the bars for it to enjoy. Only that morning it had routed and grunted and squealed because it had had no breakfast. Her mother had said its noise got on her nerves and her father had looked uncomfortable, although he had passed it off by saying: "No. No breakfast today, piggy. You're going to have a big operation by and by and there's no breakfast before operations."

'Now it had had its operation and there it hung, cold and stiff and so very, very dead. Not funny at all any more, but in some queer way dignified. The butcher had draped a long, lacy piece of fat from its own interior over one of its forelegs, in the manner in which ladies of that day sometimes carried a white lacy shawl, and

Margaret Lane

that last touch seemed to Laura utterly heartless. She stayed there a long time, patting its hard, cold side and wondering that a thing so recently full of life and noise could be so still. Then, hearing her mother call her, she ran out of the door farthest from where she was working lest she should be scolded for crying over a dead pig.

'There was fried liver and fat for supper and when Laura said "No, thank you," her mother looked at her rather suspiciously, then said, "Well, perhaps better not, just going to bed and all; but here's a nice bit of sweetbread. I was saving it for Daddy, but you have it. You'll like that." And Laura ate the sweetbread and dipped her bread in the thick, rich gravy and refused to think about the poor pig in the pantry, for, although only five years old, she was learning to live in this world of compromises.'

There was no room for sentimentality in the life she was born to; it was too near the bone. Yet in spite of that, and also because of it, it had a value and a saltiness which it would be hard to find in villages today. Life and work were hard, but the work that was done was essential work, and respected, and life was not wasted in a struggle to keep up appearances. In old age Flora Thompson, who like her father was always a bit of a radical, could see clearly that when country poverty was abolished it was not the only thing which had been swept away. 'I fear,' she wrote to H. J. Massingham in 1943, 'that much of the salt of the earth will be lost in the process of transforming the old, sturdy, independent type of farm labourer into the proletariat. The only hope is that the countryman's roots are so strong and so well down in the soil that, after this terrible time is over, the country virtues will spring anew.'

When reading *Lark Rise to Candleford*, so rich in detail of sight, sound and smell that one has the illusion of remembering the very hedgerows for oneself, it is strange to realise that these deep impressions were absorbed by Flora Thompson before she was fourteen, that being the age when she left home to earn her living. It had been supposed that she would go into service at twelve or thirteen, as all the hamlet girls did; (some of them, indeed, went out as young as eleven, their mothers frankly declaring, 'I shan't be sorry when our young So-and-So gets her knees under somebody else's table.

Flora Thompson

Five slices for breakfast this mornin', if you please ! ') and her mother had planned to get her a place under one of the nurses she knew from her own days in service. But the child's unusual thirst for reading, and the peculiarity of her always wanting scraps of paper to write on, made her mother ambitious, and she decided to place her with another old acquaintance, the post-mistress of Fringford, who was willing to take her as junior assistant. So Flora, as she has related in *Candleford Green*, was driven by her father in the inn-keeper's cart over the eight miles of country roads to the neighbouring village, and began her adult life as a post-office clerk.

Flora herself has said that Candleford Green is not, strictly speaking, Fringford, but the post-office and forge over which Miss Lane presided with so matriarchal an authority can still be seen, though the long, low white cottage has long ago ceased to fulfil either of its old functions. Miss Lane herself is drawn from a locally celebrated Mrs. Whitton, who had inherited the forge from her father, and for many years had carried on the business and that of the village post-office as well. 'I knew Mrs. Whitton well,' Flora Thompson wrote to an acquaintance many years later. 'About the time you were born she was teaching me the rudiments of the post-office business and there is a good deal of her in my Miss Lane. That character as it stands in my books is a mixture of her and of another post-mistress I served under in Surrey, but the mental attributes are entirely those of Mrs. Whitton, and the blacksmith's business of course was hers. She was a wonderful woman. She had the most observant eye and the keenest brain of anyone I have known, and had she been born later must have left her mark on the world. What a psychologist she would have made ! She was very good to me, and as I have said in one of my books, had more influence than anyone in shaping the outward course of my life.'

That life, in the early Fringford period, she has recorded fairly closely in *Candleford Green*, which gives an unforgettable account of Miss Lane's household, run on traditional lines which were old-fashioned and benevolently strict even for those days. Here Flora learned the post-office business from the bottom, selling stamps, sorting letters, working the sacred telegraph machine (which was kept under a velvet cover like a tea-cosy), and for one long and happy



FLORA THOMPSON AT FORTY

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Margaret Lane

spell acting as letter-carrier, covering miles on foot through fields and lanes with her bag. This experience was important, for it deepened the almost mystical love of solitude and nature which was to grow with the years, until it was the dominant strain in her strong character. After Fringford, she tells us no more about her personal life, for although the trilogy was eventually followed by a fourth volume, *Still Glides the Stream*, it is cast in a fictional form and goes back to the old countryside of her youth.

Between *Candleford Green*, however, and *Still Glides the Stream* she did write another book, *Heatherley*, which carries her own story a little further. She was dissatisfied with it and it was never published, but it is not without interest, since it gives some account of her life from the time that she left Fringford until her marriage. She left Mrs. Whitton, apparently, before she was twenty, and spent some time in various country post-offices, taking short holiday-relief engagements in different places, a proceeding which was frowned upon at home. 'Her people at home were beginning to speak of her as a rolling stone, and rolling stones were not in favour with country people of that day. The plea that to work, even for a short time, in one of the larger post-offices was a valuable gain in experience did not appeal to her parents. They looked upon experience as something to be gathered unconsciously, not a thing to be sought for. They preferred permanence and security.'

So in 1897 Flora, at twenty, went to work in the little Surrey village of Grayshott, where she was to remain for three years. She arrived on foot, 'dressed in a brown woollen frock with a waist-length cape of the same material and a brown beaver hat decorated with two small ostrich tips, set upright in front, back to back, like a couple of notes of interrogation. . . . The skirt, cut short just to escape contact with the ground, and so needing no holding up except in wet weather, was, her dressmaker had assured her, the latest idea for country wear. The hat she had bought on her way through London that morning. It had cost nine and elevenpence three-farthings of the pound she had saved to meet her expenses until her first month's salary was due in her new post, but she did not regret the extravagance. . . . "A good first impression is half the battle," she had been told as a child.'

Flora Thompson

She lived first with the post-master's family, then independently in lodgings. This latter arrangement was the happier of the two, for the post-master quarrelled with abnormal violence with his wife and prowled about the house at all hours, a prey to suspicions and delusions, and she had her first taste of independent happiness when she was living alone in a bare little room at ten shillings a week. (Later, the sinister post-master went out of his mind and murdered his wife and child with a carving knife, but this was fortunately after Flora had left.) She was able now for the first time to read widely, and embarked on the long haphazard self-education which she afterwards described as having been accomplished on borrowed books, free libraries, and the threepenny and sixpenny boxes of second-hand shops. Here, too, she had her first entralling glimpse of real writers, for the 'Surrey highlands' had been recently discovered by the intelligentsia, and there being no post-office at that time in Hindhead the celebrities who frequented the neighbourhood bought their stamps and sent their telegrams from Grayshott. Conan Doyle, Grant Allen, Richard le Gallienne and others had taken houses in the neighbourhood, and Bernard Shaw, lately married, had rented a furnished house in Grayshott itself. 'I used to listen to the conversation of these,' she wrote later, 'meeting and greeting each other at my counter, myself as unregarded as a piece of furniture, but noting all. Perhaps these "great examples" encouraged my desire to express myself in writing, but I cannot remember the time when I did not wish and mean to write. My brother and I used to make up verses and write stories and diaries from our earliest years, and I had never left off writing essays for the pleasure of writing. No-one saw them; there was no-one likely to be interested.'

When she was twenty-four, however, this independent single life came to an end, for in the course of the penny readings and village soirées which went on in the neighbourhood, she met John Thompson, a young post-office clerk from Aldershot, and as soon as he was transferred to the main post-office in Bournemouth they were married.

At the time it must have seemed a sensible step, and at first the marriage was happy enough in a humdrum way; but the world of the white-collar working class was alien to Flora, and she was dismayed by its narrowness and prejudice. Her love of reading was

Margaret Lane

now condemned as a waste of time, her attempts at writing sneered at. Everything she did, it seemed, was wrong. A book in one's hand, or a handful of garden flowers on the supper table, was mocked as a ridiculous pretension, yet she found herself looked down on by her new relations for having been born in a cottage. They considered themselves above the labouring class, and spared no pains to make this clear to her.

The Thompsons were very poor. The pay of a post-office clerk allowed no luxuries, and the free library, her one resource, had to be reached on foot after the day's work was done, for there was rarely the penny or twopence to spare for the tram. 'With a house to run single-handed and with children being born and nursed my literary dreams faded for a time. But I still read a good deal. For the first time in my life I had access to a good public library, and I slipped in like a duck slipping into water and read almost everything. I had no guidance except my own natural taste. But perhaps I was fortunate in this, as I was able to follow my own bent.'

A daughter and son, Winifred¹ and Basil, were born during the Bournemouth years, and when they were no longer babies, and she could contrive a little leisure from children and housework, Flora began to write again, as secretly as she could because of her husband's disapproval. Her first attempt was an essay on Jane Austen, which she entered for a competition in a woman's paper, and which, to her astonishment, was awarded the prize. Encouraged, she sent an article, then a short story, to the same paper, and both were accepted. The payment for each was only a few shillings, but the effect of this small success was morally important: if her eccentricities were paid for they would be tolerated. 'I had earned the right to use my scanty leisure as I wished.'

The discovery that she could earn a pound or two by writing delayed for many years her development as a writer, for she determined to earn a good education for her children, and set herself to

¹ I am indebted to Miss Winifred Thompson, who is her mother's literary executor, for much help and information, and for permission to quote from unpublished material. I should also like to thank Sir Arthur Bryant, Mrs. A. J. Massingham, Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Ball, Dr. and Mrs. Max Tyler, Mr. Leonard Clark, Miss Eva Hillsden, the Oxford University Press and others who were kind enough to lend letters.—M. L.

Flora Thompson

the manufacture of 'small, sugared love stories,' which, however artificial she knew them to be, were at least easy to sell. She comforted herself by writing verse, for like many writers of pure and musical prose, she believed for many years that her gifts were not for prose at all but for poetry, and her unconfessed ambition was to be a poet. This secret hope was never realised, for her verse never rose above modest magazine level ; but her love of poetry did at least bring her the one literary friendship of her life, and this proved to be important. In 1912, after the sinking of the *Titanic*, a Scottish physician and poet called Ronald Campbell Macfie wrote an ode on the disaster which was published in a periodical, and readers were invited, as a competition, to send their criticisms. Flora Thompson's admiring review of the ode won the prize, and so pleased Dr. Macfie that he wrote her a grateful and charming letter, and later made a point of coming to see her.

Dr. Macfie is not often remembered today, but at that time, though never a successful man in the worldly sense, he had published a sufficient number of books, and was well enough known and respected as a writer, to seem to Flora Thompson like a glorious messenger from the inaccessible world she had always longed to enter. He was a poet who had published a considerable body of verse of a traditional kind, and who was at his best when celebrating some public or national event with a classical ode. He was a prolific writer, besides, on popular medicine, having made a special study of tuberculosis and believing passionately in the importance of public education in hygiene. A man of commanding presence and personality, he was quick-tempered, argumentative and attractive. His life was divided between irreconcilable interests ; between poetry, medicine, travel, and a variety of humanitarian causes ; and this scattering of his talents kept him poor. His was a restless temperament, and he had never married. He had, he told Flora Thompson, renounced any idea of domestic life 'in order to get a few months here and there to write the poetry and philosophy in me. Without money (in fact with a heavy burden of debt on my shoulders) I have struggled on and have achieved enough leisure here and there to do a little work, which though almost unrecognised I believe to be immortal.' He was never in the same place for long and they met rarely ; but

Margaret Lane

from time to time he would descend for a few hours' visit, and from their first meeting until his death twenty years later their friendship was unbroken. From the beginning it was of great importance to Flora Thompson, for apart from his personal fascination Macfie was the only friend she ever had who shared her interests and gave her strenuous encouragement. 'Forty ! What is forty ?' he wrote to her in 1918 ; 'I am fifty-one ; but if I could yet have ten years of opportunity to write I should be content. Look forward ! Rejoice in your great gift and fight for opportunity, even if it be ten years later ; and perhaps I who am still fighting may in a few years be able to find some ways and means for you. Who knows ?' It was he who, three years later, encouraged her to send a little collection of her verses to a publisher, and accepted her dedication with pride when the paper-bound volume, *Bog Myrtle and Peat*, eventually appeared. In spite of kindly reviews it was a failure, and the disappointment convinced her at last that she was not a poet ; but the achievement, however modest, had its value, and to the end of her life she was grateful for Macfie's faith in her as a writer.

In 1916 John Thompson was promoted to his first post-mastership, and they moved to Liphook in Hampshire. It was a sad year, for Edwin, the brother whom Flora so much resembled and loved, had been killed in action, and her one deeply emotional link with her childhood was broken. She was unable to write, for as well as her work for home and children she had undertaken arduous wartime duties at the post-office, sorting the mail at four o'clock in the morning and doing the work of the clerk who had been called up. As soon as the war was over, however, she began again ; as she wrote of Laura in *Heatherley*, 'the old feeling had revived that in return for the precious opportunity known as life some further effort other than those involved in mere living was required of her' ; and on the strength of her small earnings Winifred and Basil were sent to excellent day schools, one to Petersfield Grammar School and the other to Haslemere. The country round Liphook was a renewed pleasure after suburban Bournemouth, and she revived her habit of long brooding walks, feeding her old hunger for solitude and nature. These walks bore fruit of a kind, for she began to write a series of nature essays for a little magazine called the *Catholic Fireside* ; (no-one

Flora Thompson

now remembers how she first came across it, for she had no Catholic connections) ; and these were so well liked that the series was continued for nearly twenty years. It was an excellent practice ground for a writer with her gifts of observation, and this small success encouraged her to try her hand in a more general field. The *Daily News* and various women's magazines now printed her occasional essays, and she felt that at last she had become a professional writer.

She was still, however, a long way from the discovery of the kind of writing she was best fitted to do, and in the next ten years incalculable time and energy were wasted in following false trails. For several years she 'ghosted' for a big-game hunter who had advertised in the literary press for an amanuensis, and had the wry satisfaction of seeing her work appear under his name in *Chambers's Journal*, *The Scottish Field*, and various African papers. She also, in 1924, founded a postal association, The Peverel Society, for literary aspirants, and this work, in the value of which she ardently believed, devoured her leisure and energy for eighteen years.

It was a modest amateur affair, but it satisfied her longing for contact with other writers, and since it brought her a number of distant friends who shared her interests, the time it absorbed was perhaps not altogether wasted. The members did not meet ; each paid a few shillings a year to cover expenses, and contributed something once a month, either prose or verse, to a portfolio which went the round of the members by post. Each was invited to criticise, and Flora Thompson's criticisms (the few that survive) are remarkable for their workmanlike approach. She would have made a good teacher or a good editor ; her advice has nothing amateur about it. Criticising a short story or writing a course of instruction for her members, she invariably shows a practical grasp of literary techniques and difficulties. The pity is that she spent so many years in coaching amateurs which might have been given to the development of her own unique gifts. There was not time for both, and as the years went by she began to see that this work, so earnestly undertaken, was by its very nature doomed to disappointment. The members fell off or failed to turn into writers, 'saying that their husband or wife thought writing was a waste of time, or thought themselves neglected.'

Margaret Lane

The Peverel Society was begun at Liphook and continued at Dartmouth, where John Thompson was transferred as post-master in 1928. The Liphook years had not been unhappy, and she was sorry to go. A third child, Peter, had been born at the little post-office when she was forty-one and had thought her days of child-bearing were over, and though she had not welcomed his birth with any pleasure he became increasingly dear to both parents and did something to revive the dwindling comfort of their marriage. It was at Liphook, too, that she had first achieved a home that she really loved. They had lived for twelve years at the post-office, and at last had bought a house in the wooded and hilly country outside the village ; but no sooner were they settled at Woolmer Gate than her husband, in a fit of restlessness which she found hard to forgive, 'put in for promotion,' and was transferred almost immediately to Dartmouth. Flora remained behind to sell the house, an operation quietly prolonged for more than a year ; a happy year, spent alone with her children in the sort of countryside she loved, endlessly reading and writing without criticism or reproach.

When at last the move to Dartmouth was accomplished, however, she was pleased with her new surroundings and soon grew fond of the town and harbour and the steep wooded walks behind the house. The house itself, 'The Outlook,' was in that highest part known as Above Town, with a dazzling view over the whole estuary. Here for the next twelve years she lived a secluded life, making few friends and seeming to desire none. With only the youngest child at home she had more leisure, and though the Peverel Society still absorbed the greater part of it, she was beginning at last to write to please herself. She spent much time on the beginnings of several novels, but none of them satisfied her. Her only encouragement still came from Dr. Macfie, and when in 1931 he suddenly died she was slow to recover from the private misery of his loss. At last, however, she began to feel her way towards the theme which had been waiting unrecognised for so long. She began to write sketches about her childhood.

The first of these was *Old Queenie*, a loving remembrance of the bee-keeper and lace-maker of Juniper, whose cottage had stood (and still stands) at the back of the 'end house' which had been Flora's

Flora Thompson

home. This essay appeared in 1937 in *The Lady*, and is the kernel of a much longer chapter which she presently expanded for *Lark Rise*. This was the beginning ; *May Day*, another chapter, was accepted by the *Fortnightly Review*, and with such enthusiasm that she was encouraged to send these and several other pieces of a like nature to the Oxford University Press, where they came into the hands of Sir Humphrey Milford, who instantly recognised their quality and wrote to the unknown author, urging her to expand them into a book. This was the signal she needed ; the material was rich and copious, and for the first time, as a writer, she felt at home. She began *Lark Rise* in the autumn of 1937 and worked on it steadily for eleven months. It was published in 1939 and was received with universal praise. The sales were not large at first, but they were encouraging, and her publishers pressed her to write more. *Over to Candleford* was written in the following year and she began to feel the first glow of success ; but failing health and personal sorrow were soon to rob her of its satisfactions. In 1940 John Thompson had retired from the Post Office, and they had left the house at Dartford for a cottage at Brixham. Basil, her elder son, had gone some years before to farm in Australia ; Winifred, her daughter, was nursing in Bristol, and Peter, the beloved youngest, had left home to join the Merchant Navy. He was killed within a few months, when his convoy ship was torpedoed in mid-Atlantic. Flora Thompson never entirely recovered from this shock. She fell ill, developed pneumonia, and recovered only at the expense of a damaged heart and the loss of much of her old sturdy vitality. A year later she forced herself to return to work, and *Candleford Green* was written in the space of nine months, 'under difficulties,' as she wrote to a friend, 'several of the passages to the sound of bombs falling . . . the typescript already looks worn through being taken in and out of the Morrison shelter.' She felt little pleasure in its success, which surprised her by being greater than that of its predecessors. 'I hear that it is the most popular of all my books with the general reader,' she wrote, 'a fact not altogether pleasant to me when I think of *Lark Rise*. I have often thought that I have belittled the latter book by writing these light, gossipy little books around it.' She seems not to have realised that in the three books she had produced a work of art of

Margaret Lane

singular excellence, and even when, in 1945, the three were published together as a trilogy, unequivocally establishing her as a writer, her feeling about it was curiously remote. ('It's got an element of real greatness,' Sir Arthur Bryant had written to H. J. Massingham. 'I put it at least as high as Cranford, and I think higher; for under its quiet artistry and truth there's passion and fire.') 'Most flattering, and astonishing,' she commented, when the reviews began to come in. 'Twenty years ago I should have been beside myself with joy, but I am now too old to care much for the bubble reputation.'

She was nearly seventy. Her small success had come too late, and after too long a struggle, to mean much. Even her husband's surprised pride, now genuinely felt, appealed more to her sense of irony than to anything else. 'Words as to the inner emotions do not come readily to me,' she wrote to H. J. Massingham, who had written a perceptive introduction to her trilogy, 'for I have led an isolated life mentally and spiritually. . . . The very few people I know personally . . . are not reading people, and though reviewers have been kind and I have had a few letters of appreciation from readers, no one but you has recognised my aims and intentions in writing of that more excellent way of life of our forefathers.'

She had still one piece of work to finish, but it was, as she said, like wearily rolling a heavy stone uphill; she felt that she had said what she wanted to say, and would have been glad to write no more if it had not been for the earnest encouragement of her publishers. *Still Glides the Stream* was finished with fatigue and difficulty, a few weeks before her heart finally failed. She died suddenly, alone in her room, in May 1947.

There are very few likenesses of Flora Thompson in existence. All her life she showed a great aversion from being photographed, and even her daughter has been able to show me only two faded reproductions—one of a modest studio portrait, with smooth-drawn hair and downcast eyes, the other of a snapshot taken in middle age, when her face had acquired its look of withdrawn stoicism. I am allowed, however, to quote from a letter to Miss Winifred Thompson from Mr. Arthur Ball, a Peverel member of the early days who had visited Flora Thompson a few months before her death. They had corresponded for many years but had never met, and Mr. Ball's

Flora Thompson

description gives so excellent an impression of her in her old age that it tells us, perhaps, more than any photograph. ‘When we went to Brixham in 1946,’ he wrote, ‘and met your mother, my first impression was quite unlike what I had expected. Probably because once, in the Peverel days, members’ photographs were circulated, and F. T. seemed dark and willowy, the sort of appearance one would expect from her Christian name, very graceful and feminine. I saw a Flora Thompson who was sturdy, resolute, and, with her features chiselled to an expression of remarkable strength, more like the portraits of Marie Curie than anyone else I can think of. Of course the winning, gentle side was there all right, but she seemed to have attained a remarkable independence in her character, and this struck me immediately. And there was that underlying simplicity which the very best natures usually seem to acquire or have as a matter of birthright. When I think of the terrible time she must have had with her illness I am struck too by her remarkable freedom from absorption in self or self-pity—it was all in the other direction, a vital and eager interest in the people she was talking to.’



The few people who remember her dwell on this impression of quiet strength, on a warm and direct simplicity, apparently down-to-earth but not without its humour and quick emotion; also on a hidden, reclusive element in her, which held aloof from human contact and led her into mystical sympathy with nature. She once heavily marked a couplet in her copy of Francis Thompson’s *To the*

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Margaret Lane

Dead Cardinal, and to the end of her life remembered and often returned to it, as though she found in it the poignancy of personal significance.

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With all the world for cell.

All this, and more, is to be found in her best work, which for all her reticence is continuously and profoundly self-revealing. Like W. H. Hudson, whom she admired and whom in some ways she resembled, she was secretive about her own life because it afforded little satisfaction. Like his, her essential experience was within.

Drawings by Joan Hassel

The Entrance to Hades

BY PATRICK LEIGH FERMOR

On the map, the southern part of the Peloponnese looks like a misshapen tooth, fresh-torn from its gum, with three peninsulas jutting southward in jagged and carious roots. The central prong is formed by the Taygetus mountains, which, from their northern foothills in the heart of the Morea to their storm-beaten southern point, Cape Matapan, are roughly a hundred miles long. About half their length—seventy-five miles on their western and forty-five on their eastern flank and measuring fifty miles across—projects tapering into the sea. This is the Mani. As the Taygetus range towers to eight thousand feet at the centre, subsiding to north and south in chasm after chasm, these distances as the crow flies can with equanimity be trebled and quadrupled and sometimes multiplied tenfold when reckoning overland. As the inland Taygetus divides the Messenian from the Laconian plain, its continuation, the sea-washed Mani, divides the *Ægean* Sea from the Ionian, and its wild cape, the ancient Taenarus and the entrance to Hades, is the southermost point of continental Greece. Nothing but the blank Mediterranean, sinking below to enormous depths, lies between this spike of rock and the African sands, and from this point the huge wall of the Taygetus, whose highest peaks bar the northern marches of the Mani, rears a bare and waterless inferno of rock.



We boarded Panayioti's little caique, the *St. Nicholas*, just before dawn broke. Four black-shawled women and a ragged priest clustered in the stern, and, at the embarkation of the latter, Panayiotis, for our benefit, made the privy gesture of spitting, to avert the Eye and the evil fortune which are supposed to dog the footsteps of priests,

Patrick Leigh Fermor

especially on board ship.¹ Up came the anchor, and the women's sleeves fluttered in repeated signs of the cross before they resorted to their lemon pomanders. An old man and a boy were beside us in the bows. Both the man's hands had been blown off illegally dynamiting fish and one of the stumps was fitted, in lieu of a hook, with an adjustable clamp to hold a cigarette which he lit with a match held in his teeth and struck on a box tucked under his armpit. (These mutilations are common on all Greek coasts.) The water was so clear and smooth that for many fathoms one could follow each detail of the weeds and pebbles and rocks. The sharp-eyed boy, precariously prone along the bowsprit and gazing down, spotted and named the fish as they flickered below : "A shoal of *marides*," he would cry, or "There goes a *gopa*" and once, with a shout and a downward gesture with his fist as though he were lunging with a trident, "A big *synagrida* ! Oh, the cuckold ! *Na !*"; thereafter resuming a rapt scrutiny as motionless as a figurehead.

Except for the throb of the engine all was silent. The bows made a crease like a long soft fold of silk over the stillness of the water. The wrinkled rocks of the shore were repeated upside down in a looking glass, the emerging spikes turning into symmetrical lozenges invisibly conjoined along the water's edge. Every now and then a faint shaft of wind, coming from nowhere, would blur the smooth surface with a sudden fan of ruffles, and then all would again be smooth, leaving the boat and its passengers afloat in a blue dimensionless dream.

Dawn had already broken, but we were sailing south-east, and the declining watershed of the Kakovouni lay between us and the sun, falling in a steep staircase of rock to the isthmus that linked it to the last upheaval of Matapan. Couched in deep notches of this palisade, climbing lances of sunlight were sloping forward then falling level and growing longer and brighter, and, as the sun's edge cleared the skyline, dipping and expanding down these western slopes in a score of mile-long geometrical shafts ; doubling in brightness where two or three of them overlapped, dimming when an intervening hill-top blocked their golden advance with a sudden blue hypotenuse of shadow. Dawn and sunset civilise and rationalise these blank

¹ The alternative exorcism is to touch one's pudenda.

The Entrance to Hades

expanses of grey mountain, reducing systemless chaos to sense, and running the mountains into each other with a fluid swing, quickening them with rhythm and sinuosity. Laying soft shadows along their flanks, dawn turns the ashen slag to champagne colour and apricot and lilac and unfolds the dark branching torrent beds and pins them espalierwise across the ranges, until they shrink and vanish under the climbing sun, waiting for dusk to expand and subdue them once more.

Now the olive terraces were succeeding each other in stroke after stroke of shade while the ledges they buttressed were thin curling bands of light. The towers of Alika moved towards us overhead, and the ruin-crested cliff of Kyparrisos ; then Moudanistica, serrating its high pass with shadows ; then Tzoukhalia and the tall spike of Vathy, entirely crowned with towers. On half a dozen heights a hundred sombre towers, each cluster thrust aloft on a coil of terraces, sailed up into the morning to break the parallel slanting rays of the sun, every tongue-tied campanile aiming a long blade of shadow down the sun's advance.

Then, as the caique sailed further east, village after village, turning its sunlit walls to us, seemed to be suspended in the air, to glow and flash there like the lustres of chandeliers. A headland rose and hid them, and, as we sailed past the little gulf of Marmari, the sun was already high in the limitless Greek sky, which is higher and lighter and surrounds one closer and stretches further into space than anywhere else in the world. It is neither daunting nor belittling, but hospitable and welcoming to man and as much his element as the earth ; as though a mere error in gravity pins him to the rocks or the ship's deck and prevents him from being assumed into that infinity.



At Marmari the Mani is little more than a mile across. The mountains sink to a saddle, the concave coasts lace it into a wasp waist, then it rises and swells again for a last rocky league or two, the coasts falling almost sheer. We drew alongside a narrow ledge and the passengers leaped nimbly ashore, grasping adzes and sacks to chop the rock-face for lime, leaving us to sail on down the deserted lee of the peninsula. Turning a salient, we came upon a solitary fisherman casting his nets, which were buoyed every yard or so with a

hollow gourd. These grow in the shape of globes that narrow at the top to a slender waist and then expand once more in a graceful neck which again contracts to the exact diameter, when the stalk is snipped off, for a cork. Scooping out the seeds, they clean them by pouring in gravel which they shake till all is smooth inside; then they are left to dry in the sun. This induces the hue of baked clay, making them light as feathers and hard as wood, until they look like perfect and elaborate pottery: convenient wine flasks for a journey, and, here afloat, resembling prisons for Arabian djinns. Both bulwarks were equipped with pairs of twin uprights of wood ending, like airy catamarangs, in two prongs in which his boat-long tridents lay. These forked rests for fish spears were painted blood red like those mysterious horns, which, with double-headed axes, are the dominating gear of Minoan palaces. There was a wave and a shout, and another bulge of rock had hidden him. A few minutes further south, in the centre of another little bay, a dark cave yawned over the water. Panayioti cut down the speed of the caique.

"There it is," he said. "The entrance to Hades."

He was afraid to stop his engine, declaring it was a devil to start again, but he would steer in circles until I got back. So I dived in and made for the cave's mouth, which yawned like the upper jaw of a whale (the lower jaw being submerged), about thirty feet above the sea. As I swam inside a number of swallows flew out and I could see their little nests clinging to the cave walls and the flanks of stalactites. The cave grew much darker as it penetrated the mountain side, and a couple of bats, which must have been hanging from the roof, wheeled squeaking towards the light. The roof sank lower, and, swimming along the clammy walls, I found a turning to the right, and followed it a little way in, but it soon came to a stop. I tried all the way round and swam under water to see if there was a submerged entrance to another sea-cave beyond. But there was nothing. The ceiling had closed in to about a foot and a half overhead, as I could touch it with my hand. The air was fairly dark but under the surface the water gleamed a magical luminous blue and it was possible to stir up shining beacons of phosphorescent bubbles with a single stroke or a kick. Strangely, it was not at all sinister, but, apart from the coldness of this water which the sun never reached,

The Entrance to Hades

silent and calm and beautiful. The submarine light from the distant cave mouth made the intruder, when he plunged, phosphorous-plumed, into the cold depths, seem to be swimming through the heart of a colossal sapphire.

I had never imagined the whole of the cave's floor to be under the sea. None of the legends mention it, though there is not a shadow of doubt that this is the cave through which those famous descents to the Underworld were made. When Aphrodite, in a rage, sent poor Psyche here to bring back the mysterious casket which would restore her beauty, Psyche was advised by a friendly tower (grown articulate at the sight of her about to fling herself from his summit), as follows : 'The famous city of Lacedaemon is not far from here. Go there and ask to be directed to Taenarus, which is rather an out of the way place to find. It is on a peninsula to the south. Once you get there you'll find one of the ventilation holes of the Underworld. Put your head through it and you'll see a road running downhill, but there'll be no traffic on it. Climb through at once and the road will lead you straight to Pluto's palace. But don't forget to take with you two pieces of barley bread soaked in honey water, one in each hand, and two coins in your mouth.'

Could the land have tilted here, plunging far under water one of those measureless caverns so common in the Greek mountains, that go wavering into the dark mineral for slithering and zigzagging furlongs, along which, with sudden draughts blowing the taper out, the intruder crawls past organ pipes and chasms and stone honeycombs and between stalactites and stalagmites like the molars and wisdom teeth of some tremendous monster on the point of clenching, to arrive at last, deep in the airless mountain's heart and pouring with sweat as in the hottest of calidaria, at the stifling shrine of some local, troglodytic and half-wild saint (like that of St. John the Hunter on the Acrotiri in Crete), installed to counteract the ancient chthonian demons that dwelt there before Christianity came ? An endless grotto from which the Lacedaemonians, knowing whither it led, recoiled in terror ? Its mouth might lie drowned and swamped somewhere in the hyaline chasms beneath my water-treading feet ; a landslide may have effaced or a boulder sealed it. The damp surrounding walls were seamless and solid. Fortunately, mythology is



VATHEIA

Photo : Joan Eyres Monsell

One of the many tower-villages of the Mani in the extreme south of the Peloponnese, looking westwards to Yerolimena and Cape Grosso.



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The western flank of the Mani, leading, on the right, to the isthmus of Marmari which links the peninsula to Cape Matapan (the ancient Taenaros) and the entrance to Hades.

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Patrick Leigh Fermor

seldom so literal, and the fact that Charon might not have been the first boatman Psyche had to pay on the day of her descent is of no importance. Down there lay the way to the river afloat with ghosts and the horrible three-headed dog (for whom the two sops like the two coins for the ferryman, were a return ticket), the dim fields and the long sad halls of Persephone ; the grey world where the ghost of the mother of Odysseus was wafted again and again from his arms like the shadow of a dream. It was under this very cave that the bereaved Orpheus, making the dread journey in quest of lost Eurydice, lulled the hateful Cerberus to sleep with his lyre ; and here that Herakles dragged the hell-dog into the upper air, slavering and snarling (and, it seems to me, soaked to the skin) by its triple scruff.

There is always something about these earthly identifications with Hades that fills one with awe. Lethe, they say, rolls its stream of oblivion near the Syrtes in Africa. The source of the Styx sends its little cascade down the rocks of Mount Chelmos in Arcadia, and I have followed the baleful windings of Cocytus across the Thesprotian plains in Epirus, not far from the deep forested gorge under indomitable Souli where the Acheron falls thundering ; (for literary reasons I swam across it victoriously three times).¹ It is somewhere near here that Odysseus, on the orders of Circe, descended among the shades. The most sinister of all, a few miles from Naples, beside the small gloomy mere of Avernus, is the deep tunnel through the volcanic tufa where the Cumæan Sibyl lived, and where, by flickering torchlight, one can see, so far from its Arcadian source, a tributary of Styx. It was here that Aeneas made his facile descent. In the meadows near Enna, the Sicilian peasants still point to the spring of Cyane where Pluto opened the earth with a trident-blow to carry Persephone down to his dismal kingdom. The temple of Poseidon, high on the rocks above, was an emplacement of the psychopomp, or processions of conjured souls. In such tasks, Hermes played an important conducting role. When, in Christian times, the snaky wand became a flaming sword and the wings migrated from his heels to his shoulders and expanded to form the attributes of St. Michael, the god turned archangel was often described by pious eyes here,

¹ See Gerard de Nerval, *El Desdichado*.

The Entrance to Hades

hovering by the dread threshold to dragoon the hordes of the damned on their final journey down.

A few strokes carried me round the corner of rock, the roof lifted and the sunlit mouth of the cave beckoned in a brilliant semi-circle round which the swallows were still twittering and wheeling. Beyond, in the flashing sunlight, the caïque, although quite close, looked very small and far away. It was still travelling in a ring, furrowing its circular wake again and again. Joan sat at the tiller, Panayoti leant against the mast lighting a cigarette. How clear the daylight looked, and how bright the colours ! I caught hold of the shank of the anchor on the boat's next circuit and putting a foot on the one rusty fluke, took Panayoti's extended hand and climbed on board.

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The summit of the peninsula was steadily sinking as we followed a southward course. At last the trim lighthouse of Matapan appeared, with the rocks falling steeply to the cape. At the very moment that we reached it, the engine spluttered and seemed on the point of extinction and our caïque sailed slowly past. Leaning over the edge, it was possible to touch the last sharp edge of rock where it met the water. This delicate pinpointing of a geographical feature my finger-tip had often covered on the atlas page was a satisfactory moment, like the nursery ambition of closing one's fingers, one day, round an actual north pole in the snow. That final jut of barnacled limestone was the southernmost fragment of continental Greece, and, except for the Andalusian rocks below the flat Moorish roofs of Tarifa beyond the Pillars of Hercules, of Europe too. All the islands lying further south—though nothing actually intervened between this point and the desert—were scattered Greek outposts and skirmishes on the sea-roads to Africa and Asia ; my forefinger was on the phalanx-tip. These are simple pleasures.

A few feet further along the lighthouse keeper was sitting on a rock fishing with rod and line. He looked surprisingly neat and sedate for this lonely promontory. We were sailing so close that he only just managed in time to pluck his line clear. His face lit up.

"What news ?" he shouted. "*Ti nea ?*"

"Good," we shouted. "All good. *Ola kala !*"

Patrick Leigh Fermor

"Order and Quietness," Panayioti supplemented. "*Taxis kai isychia!*"

"May God be glorified," he answered. Taking a pear out of his haversack, he put it back and chose a better. We were well past him now, but the pear sailed through the air and alighted as though by magic in Panayioti's one free hand. He stood up to throw two more which fell safely into the bottom of the boat. "Go towards the Good!" he shouted as he cast his line once more. Joan pushed the tiller to port and we sailed haltingly along over the remaining half-a-dozen yards which turned us north-east into the new world of the Gulf of Laconia.

Away to the east we could discern the faint outlines of the Elaphonisi—Deer Island—and of Kythera, the birthplace not only of Aphrodite, but of Lafcadio Hearn, both hovering on the water as insubstantially as puffs of pale blue smoke; between them and Cape Matapan lay an extent of water, which, one would have thought (and thought, it seems, wrongly) no cockcrow could ever span. The sky and the sea were a single faint blue and only these wraiths of islands hinted the whereabouts of the faraway dividing line, until the eye, travelling upwards, could discern, high above that invisible horizon, a yet fainter ghost: the long sierra of the Laconian peninsula in a faint and hair-thin seismograph climbing and falling and climbing again across the sky and dying away northwards at last on its aerial journey to the main body of the Peloponnese.

Here and there, as faint as a feather, hung the suggestion of a salient, the thread of a celestial ravine descending a little way and vanishing into the sky on which, half-way to the burning zenith, that whole imponderable range was afloat. It died away long before one could follow the drop of its southern extremity to Cape Malea. Behind the two transparent islands, the sea and the sky melted together in the vague and luminous unity of a painted Chinese background. There in the blue haze, circled by tempest-haunting birds, lay the terrible Cape, whose storms almost dashed the ships of Menelaus and Ajax, and those of many later seamen, to fragments. The storms of Malea carried Odysseus clean off his course, past Kythera and away for days till he stepped on to the island where—(ah, where?)¹—

¹ Djerba?

The Entrance to Hades

the Lotus-Eaters lived. At the beginning of the last century an anchorite had his hermitage on the very tip, and lived off the alms of passing sailors.

Scarcely a wave had rocked the *St. Nicholas* as she rounded Matapan, but many a ship has been smashed on those sharp rocks. The faltering engine died with a gasp and we were becalmed. A sluggish current carried us slowly northwards, and, while Panayioti laboured at the engine—promoting, again and again, brief velleities of action that petered out in a cough—we toiled with poles, fending the caique's bright timbers off the fierce peninsula spikes.

Hours passed and ashore all shade vanished as though it were a liquid whose few pools among the rocks the sun of noon had quite dried up. We anchored and waited, the sail hanging dead, for the summer wind. Even with swimming round the boat and lying on the decks or the rocks, the lapse of time and the merciless triumph of the sun began to grow oppressive. It must have been for this afternoon wind that Cephalus, hot with hunting and stretched on the shores of Thessaly, called with such longing that poor Procris, hidden in a brake, thought it was a rival's name and met her death. But no wind came, and at last it was a dapper caique, the *St. George* of Piraeus bound for Kalamata, which, late in the afternoon, picked us up and carried us, several miles off her course, to the bay of Porto Cayo. Panayioti, besides having paid for last night's dinner, tried to refuse all payment, as he had not been able to drop us where he had promised. This time, fortunately, we won.

Porto Cayo is a beautiful but rather a mournful bay, a deep inlet scooped from the eastern slope of the peninsula corresponding to Marmari on the western shore, the steep saddle between forming the isthmus that links Cape Matapan to the Mani. It was on the high rocks between here and the cape that the temple of Poseidon had stood, on the emplacement of one to Apollo in Mycenaean times. It was the central shrine of the Spartans, an inviolable sanctuary for anyone on the run and the seat of an oracle. It was also a great meeting place for the elders of the cities of Laconia, and one of several shrines in Greece where the souls of the dead could be summoned by their slayers and placated by sacrifice. Marble slabs found among the ruins prove that human sacrifices were not unknown. Pausanias—

Patrick Leigh Fermor

not the historian and geographer, but the victor of Plataea—was starved to death here in the temple when the Spartans discovered his secret intelligence with Xerxes.¹ It was probably destroyed by the pirates of Cilicia. Little remains, and many fragments and memorial slabs from here and Kyparissos are scattered in the neighbouring villages. Up the steep northern flank stretch the ruins of an enormous Turkish fortress, built at the nadir of Maniot fortunes at the same time as Kelephas after Crete fell. It was the scene of hard-fought Maniot triumphs over the Turks during the reign of Zanetbey—actions commanded by the great Klepht Lambros Katsonis and by the father of that Odysseus Androutzos who was later to share a cave near Delphi with Trelawny while, in Missolonghi along the coast, Byron lay dying.

It is called Porto Cayo either from the Porto Quaglio of the Venetians or a Port aux Cailles of the Franks, for the surrounding rocks are the last place where the quails, migrating south in millions, alight before flying off to Crete and to Africa. I have seen the fringes of their departing hosts further east in the Cyclades, and of another mass departure, that of the storks, in the Dodecanese. These are prone to hug the Asian coasts, huddling at night in vast unwieldy encampments on every available tree, fidgeting and shifting all night long until, at daybreak, they spread their wings again and sail away south in interminable straggling armadas. They set off from southern Poland and the Ukraine, gathering contingents in Bukovina and Bessarabia and Transylvania and all the Balkans and Greece until, craning their necks towards the flat roofs of Arab houses, they benight the air. The western route, from Austria and Germany and Alsace Lorraine to the coast of Portugal, lies over the straits of Gibraltar; once across, they disperse in companies to become the roof-guests of Arabs and Berbers and the Atlas tribesmen. Their shaggy nests, meanwhile, are left all winter long to be blown about by the winds and filled with snow on many a roof-top and belfry and minaret. The migration of the cranes I have only seen once, looping the

¹ Hard by, on the edge of the gulf, stands a cliff from which Petrobey Mavromichalis ordered a fornicating priest to be flung. Bound hand and foot, he was left, broken on the rocks, to perish. Both deeds have left a curse on the locality.

The Entrance to Hades

distant sky in the Sporades between Skopelos and Skyros, but Cretan shepherds have told me of that endless caravan lasting for hours and stretching beak to tail, from one edge of sky to the other so high above Mt. Ida as to be almost out of sight, but accompanied by a strange unearthly sound like a faraway conversation ; all, it used to be thought, heading for the forests of Central Africa to re-engage the pygmies (who are waiting for them with full quivers and, according to Aristotle, astride goats) in their never-ending war.

The drowsiness of a lagoon overhung this gulf. There are a few houses widely scattered, and salt and apathy seem to have eroded their dwellers. The Mani, in the accounts of many travellers and by the Greeks themselves, is reported to be mistrustful of strangers ; though once their affections have been tried, the same sources declare, they grapple them to their souls. This was the first time I had seen a trace of this initial mistrust. It took a long time and some languid and sulky bargaining, quite out of tune with the normal friendly game, to find a man with a mule to take our gear to some pleasanter village inland. Each time that we protested against the outrageous price he suggested, he shrugged and made as though to drive off, and when we had to give in, without another word he struck the mule's rump a savage blow with his stick and let out a string of oaths as though the beast were standing proxy for these foreign disturbers of his gulf-side vacancy. Greek manners to strangers are so good—a hundred times better and more friendly than anywhere else—that these rare exceptions are disproportionately distressing. All four of us (except perhaps the mule) set off up the steep stream bed in a rage, cursing the thistles and cascading pebbles at each arduous step.

When we reached the saddle and sat on the stones to cool off, these bad humours began to disperse. The mule and its churlish owner disappeared round a curve of the mountainside and left us to gaze down at the beautiful bay of Marmari, for we were on the western slant once more, high on the side of the Kakovouni whence the sun had poured that morning. A fair-haired girl climbed the path towards us carrying a lamb slung over her shoulders and round her nape, fore and hind feet held in either hand in the manner of many archaic statues. She sat down, still holding the lamb, and the friendly inquisition began. Where did we come from ? Was that our mule

Patrick Leigh Fermor

that had passed? How much had we paid for it? We told her and she exclaimed with a commiserating laugh that we had been robbed. Where were we heading for? We said that we didn't know; any of the villages inland from which we could continue up the east coast next day. She got up and readjusted her burden. "You must come and stay in my father's house," she said, "in Vatheia, a big village about half an hour away. We live in a tower."

Ahead of us, as we rounded the outcrop of mountain, a long backbone of rock advanced westward from the massif, dipped, and then rose in a high bluff, to sink through loop after widening loop of olive and corn terrace to the sea and then melt into the westward-reaching coast that slanted away under familiar villages to Yerolimena and Cape Grosso. The wide ridge was jagged with broken towers like the spikes along an iguana's back, and as it swept upwards to the bluff, they spread and climbed with it, growing in number and height; an angular stock of towers rooted in a cloud of cactus and olive and ending on the brink of the steep fall of the ledges and their many round threshing floors where the horses and mules, shrunk by distance, rotated like toys. This eclogue world and the brooding castellations unfolded in a flowing and passive enchantment through the tired gold light of the summer evening.

Vassilio, holding all four of the lamb's feet in one hand, pointed with the forefinger of the other to the tallest of Vatheia's turrets. "There," she said, "that's my father's tower and welcome to Vatheia."

It always happens in Greece that encounters with disagreeable people are followed by an overwhelming compensation, as though the entire race, by an unconscious second sight, were in league to compensate the victim and smooth his ruffled spirits. One reads of poisonous leaves, and others which contain their antidote, fluttering side by side on the same Indian tree. In the case of this small jangle, it was as if nettles and dock-leaves were growing from a single stalk.

Young Man with a Camera

BY MONICA STIRLING

In Memory of

JEAN-PIERRE PEDRAZZINI

photographer

aged 29

*shot down in the Hungarian rising,
died in Paris, November 7th, 1956*

THE day the revolution started my Aunt Natasha was drunk. Not that I realised this at the time. She'd gone to friends for supper the previous evening, and I hadn't heard her come in. I seldom hear Aunt Natasha come in at night. She is very dignified when drunk. She is very dignified at most times. But never pompous. I love my Aunt Natasha. She took me to live with her after my parents were killed in the second world war.

Incidentally, she was under no obligation to do this. No-one could have blamed her if she'd let me go to an orphanage ; because I have several other relatives who are quite rich—Uncle Arcosh, who cans caviare, even has a television set, and Aunt Natasha is not young and depends principally on her pension, which is small. Her husband was a general. I can't remember him. Nor, I sometimes think, can she. Unless he was a very odd general. Because she says gentleness was his dominating characteristic. Aunt Natasha is almost aggressively gentle herself. Tolstoy is her favourite author and we don't eat meat, although we make an exception when Uncle Arcosh gives us caviare. This doesn't often happen, luckily for Aunt Natasha's principles ;

Monica Stirling

because she doesn't cheat. She says that to say *fishes' eggs don't count* would be adding hypocrisy to wrong-doing, the thought of which so agitates her that she immediately begins losing hairpins.

It is behaviour of this kind that makes Uncle Arcosh say Aunt Natasha is merely a child in his *I am a man of the world and you can't fool me* voice. But he isn't, and you can. What he means is that she is simple and good. But as I was a child myself until recently, I know that children are not necessarily either simple or good.

In some respects, Aunt Natasha's hairpins act as barometers. For example, if in the morning I find them all over the bathroom floor, then I know she was drunk the night before. But we never discuss this. Principally because there is nothing to discuss. Getting drunk must give satisfaction, or so many adults wouldn't do it. And in Aunt Natasha's case I think drink reminds her of happiness; because when she was young and beautiful and titled (she is still titled but we don't mention this as it is no longer an advantage, on the contrary) many of her friends drank a great deal; it was part of the way they lived, like keeping tame bears and going to hear the gypsies sing, and having the kind of love affairs that go with tiaras, and never getting up from table feeling one could eat as much again. She doesn't precisely regret that life, having thought it wrong even then. As is proved by the fact that when she was twenty-one, and just married, she called together all the peasants who worked on her country estate and told them she had decided to divide her land between them. She was astounded when they said they wanted time to think over her offer, and very hurt when at last they refused it—on the grounds that she wouldn't be giving property away unless there were something wrong with it. But although she disapproved of much of her old life, there are still traces of it all over her character, like creases that only iron can remove from a piece of stuff. Drinking is one of these creases.

When drunk Aunt Natasha is apt to feel gay and reckless and to show this by tossing glasses over her shoulder. Luckily, most of our glasses are in fact plastic cups. Even if they weren't I shouldn't grudge them to Aunt Natasha. A person needs some pleasure. At school we hear a lot about our duties. But it is thanks to Aunt Natasha that I know of pleasure. Sometimes, especially this term, since we started philosophy, I wonder if they aren't making a mistake at school. Surely

Young Man with a Camera

the only reason people should do their duty is so that the world can become pleasanter to live in ?

There was no school this morning, thank goodness. But I got up early just the same because today I was going to have my first permanent wave. I had been saving up for this for months. In the modern novels in the school library the heroines have *natural* hair and no make-up, which is one of the main reasons why the heroes admire them. Here I think the writers are deviating from the truth. In any case, my hair in its natural state is terrible. You often hear of rebellious curls, well mine is rebelliously straight. So I was longing for this permanent wave.

Looking forward to something always makes me hungry, so I hurried out of bed and into the kitchen. There were the remains of some bean soup, and half a baked potato filled with hash. I put half the soup to heat while I dressed, but the gas was so low that it was only tepid when I came back. As I ate half the half potato I thought of other kinds of food ; once my friend Elsa, whose father is a porter at the American Embassy, lent me a foreign magazine full of big coloured advertisements : lemon meringue pies and steaks as big as my hand and avocado pears and duck with slices of orange and strawberry milk shakes and home-made candy and French champagne. Most of all I longed to taste a layer cake with icing which looked the way the snow does at the Poles when penguins have hobbled across it.

Meanwhile I ate my potato slowly, so as to make it last. It was somewhat mouldy, but the burnt part tasted delicious. As I finished it, I moved to the window. Usually, at this time there is a procession of people going along the street to work. Few of them ever look right or left, they hurry along in their drab clothes, their movements as jerky as those of the actors in the early Charlie Chaplin films they show us at the museum. Usually, I set my watch by them. But today the street was empty, except for a cat. It walked along stealthily, stopping now and again to look in the gutter. Once it jumped on a leaf. It was an orange cat. Wondering where the people who usually come by had gone, I put on my coat. Then it struck me that I'd better look in on Aunt Natasha before leaving. Because although she is both a fatalist and a believer in something

Monica Stirling

which is more like God than like anything else, she does worry about me, about the possibility of my getting run over, for instance : which is unnecessary, as I am not an adventuress where traffic is concerned.

So I knocked softly on her door. There was no answer. Presently I went in. The bed was empty. This frightened me. It had never happened before. Worrying as she does over me, she assumes that I worry over her, which is exact. So no matter how drunk she is, she always manages to get home. Sitting down on her bed, I began to think of the people with whom she might have had supper.

There is old Nina who is a masseuse, but she has no telephone and lives on the opposite side of the city, by the canal. And Marina, who lives with her son and daughter-in-law. And Boris, who was in love with Aunt Natasha when they were both young, and now he trains horses for the circus—and at this point there was a knock at the front door.

I ran, thinking that at last Aunt Natasha had lost her key. It is surprising she hadn't lost it before. But Aunt Natasha is surprising. I opened the door and said *darling*. Then I stopped. Outside stood a policeman. I felt as if there were a large cold stone in my stomach. But I tried to look pleasant. They can trouble you for not looking pleasant : not in theory, but in fact. The difference between theory and fact is one of the subjects about which we aren't taught at school.

After staring at me disapprovingly, he asked *did Aunt Natasha live here* in that dreadful voice that often goes with a uniform. Yes, I said, swallowing back the words *of course* only just in time. Oh, he said, sneerily, oh then I'd better know that she was actually at the Racnik hospital, having been taken ill in the street. The stone sunk deeper into my stomach. I had a job keeping calm. Or rather keeping looking calm. If they see you aren't calm they immediately think you have reprehensible reasons for this. Often, of course, they are right. From their point of view. So I started out to say *yes, my aunt is very delicate*. Luckily, I stopped. Because they might have decided that in that case she ought to be in a Home. Instead I said *thank you very much I'll come at once*. Then something odd happened. The policeman smiled. And I smiled back. And for a minute it was as if there were no uniform there making a third person.

After he'd gone I went down the street, as if following the orange

Young Man with a Camera

cat. When I got to the end I suddenly realised I didn't know the address of the Racnik hospital. So I went back and across the big square to the post office, where I hoped to find a telephone book. Usually, at this time, the square is ruled by men in dark blue peaked caps who sweep up the leaves. Often, on the way to school, we annoy them by shuffling our feet in the leaves. When they chase us away with their brooms the twigs make angry crackling sounds. But today no-one was doing anything to the leaves. They lay where they fell, looking almost as bright as the orange cat. Yet there was a smell of bonfires. But there was no smoke. I was pleased about this. I've often been vexed by *no smoke without fire* people.

To my astonishment, the post office was closed. There was no-one outside except a speckled cat caressing itself against the grille. When I turned round and looked over the square the only living creature there was another cat, walking along with a slighting look. I've often wondered why animals don't take charge of the world. Supposing they suddenly realised how many of them there are, compared with us. Supposing they suddenly objected to being assigned to fields and stables and byres and yards and mud and *service*. But of course they aren't self-organised. Neither, in some respects, is Aunt Natasha.

Behind the post office I met one of the sweepers. His cap was on backwards. I asked him where the Racnik was. He looked annoyed and walked away. When I followed him he stopped looking annoyed and looked anxious. Then he shooed me, as if I were an out of place cat. Next I went to the baker's. The baker was outside, pulling down the iron shutters. When I asked him the way to the Racnik he said *you don't want to go there now*. It took me a long time to discover the direction.

On the railway embankment there were two children playing 'blue-marbles-are-you-mine?' We said hullo to each other. In front of the gymnasium, which was as closed as the post office, were some young men in raincoats. As they ran they held their elbows in and lifted their knees high. Looking back, I can see that it was an odd morning; at the time I thought only of finding Aunt Natasha. Because, sometimes, when you are called to the hospital there has been an accident and the person is dead.

At the end of the avenue with the magnolia trees was a crowd.

Monica Stirling

Some of them carried jugs, and there was a smell of petrol. They seemed to be making for the last war memorial. This consists, in part, of an old tank the colour of left-over mustard, and I think it is time that has turned it into a memorial. I am terrified of tanks. If an aeroplane drops a bomb on you, or a soldier or policeman kills you, you may die at once, without realising what you are doing, but a tank coming nearer and nearer and nearer would make it impossible for you not to know what was going to happen to you. After seeing that old film about the siege of Berlin I had nightmares in which I was being *slowly* chased by an army of giant tortoises, their soft heads swaying slightly outside their hard shells and their necks looking like dirty crumpled paper. What made this dream particularly terrifying was their *slowness*.

Running in the opposite direction from the memorial tank I found myself in a street I didn't know, a long straight street lined with small trees looking naked and rather mean as trees do, in towns, when only just planted. There was no-one in sight. Presently two dogs appeared. They were ugly dogs, but I was quite glad of their company. At the end of the street was a statue of a liberator, dotted white with pigeon's droppings. Behind the statue, sitting on the steps, was an old woman mending the seat of a cane chair. She had no front teeth and smelt strongly of garlic. When I asked her the way to the hospital she made growling noises and the dogs stared at her as if astonished to hear a human being using their language. Then she told me to be careful, that it was one thing to get in but another to get out, they're devils in them hospitals. But she did tell me where the Racnik was. Second on the left from the Triumphal Arch. I've forgotten who triumphed there but many people were killed and their names are carved on the arch. When we are told to think of posterity it often strikes me that *we* are someone's posterity. This is not altogether an encouraging thought.

Down by the university people were running to and fro and, some of them, shouting. I ran faster. I try to be brave, but I doubt if I shall ever succeed. Shouts and waving arms and people showing their teeth as if they were secret weapons frighten me. I was almost glad to see the hospital. It was a big building, rather like the ones in pictures of eighteenth-century architecture. But the walls were dirty

Young Man with a Camera

and peeling and some of the windows, with bits of carved coats of arms over them, like icing in a half-eaten cake in Elsa's magazine advertisements, had no panes. Inside there was a desk marked Enquiries. A man in a grey overall said Aunt Natasha certainly wasn't here as he'd never heard of her. He spoke as if my suggesting he had heard of her was an insult. But another man, who was sitting in a niche behind filling in forms, suddenly looked up and said oh yes she was, she was on the second floor. He offered to show me the way and took me as far as the elevator, which had a placard on it saying TEMPORARILY OUT OF ORDER. In our block of flats we had a placard like that on the elevator cage for eighteen months, until finally Aunt Natasha stole it. She said the information had grown stale, not to say monotonous. Sometimes, when she's drunk a little, she hangs it round her neck.

The hospital stairs were painted a mustard colour like that of the memorial tank. Looking at such colours it is difficult to imagine anyone going into a paint shop and pointing and saying ah *that's* just what I'd like. There were smells of anaesthetics and frying and lavatories. The first ward I went into contained about twenty beds, close together. In each one was an old woman with tangled grey or white hair, and with teeth, usually front teeth, missing. My knees began to wobble. This was worse than tanks. Looking at the hairs, each one distinct as a twisted wire, scattered over the battered scalps, I thought of the ballet Aunt Natasha took me to—and of how lucky, really, Juliet was to die young and beautiful and expecting Romeo, instead of running the risk of remaining alive after outgrowing life.

Aunt Natasha clearly wasn't here and I ran out and into a nurse with a dirty apron who told me *she'd* never heard of Aunt Natasha, and I had no business wandering about as if I owned the place. So I said I was just going and went down the passage and hid behind a wardrobe until she was out of sight.

The second ward contained the same kind of old creatures as the first, lying there still as something washed up after a storm except for a flicker in their eyes like what you see in the eyes of animals behind bars. I went out, only just avoiding the nurse in the dirty apron, I was feeling frantic by now. And then I went into the third

Monica Stirling

ward and, immediately, from the furthest bed a hand was waved, not faintly but jauntily. I ran, trying not to cry, and clutched Aunt Natasha. All her hairpins had deserted her this time and her hair, the colour of moths and very soft and difficult to manage, covered her shoulders. It made her look like an elderly actress dressed to play a girl.

"Look, darling"—she pointed a finger at her black eye, a very bad one—"wouldn't you know I'd fall on the front of my face and not the back? You'll have to conceal my presence when Arcosh calls." She chuckled, unembarrassedly.

"How. . . ." Then I stopped myself asking how it happened. Aunt Natasha never remembers, in such circumstances, how anything happened: ". . . how about coming home?"

"An excellent idea, darling. So good of you to come, too. Because they were quite tiresome about letting me out. Forms"—she waved her long beautiful grubby hands—"filling in f-o-r-m-s, the great post-war vocation, you'd think that . . ." Suddenly bored with the topic, she turned to the bed nearest her: "Mrs. Netsky has kindly suggested that her husband, he's a butcher you see, might be able to oblige us now and again. . . ."

I looked anxiously at Mrs. Netsky. She was mumbling what sounded like an excuse.

"By all means," said Aunt Natasha graciously and, as if she'd been waiting for this signal, Mrs. Netsky put a set of large false teeth into her mouth. They didn't improve her appearance, but they did alter it. "You will be welcome," she said distinctly, and she bowed insofar as one can bow when lying in bed. Aunt Natasha bowed back, on the same lines, and I felt glad of her appearance. Even when looking a wreck, she looks a noble wreck. The difference between her and the other inmates was like the difference between our Cathedral, which I never saw before it was bombed, and a prefabricated house that's collapsed.

When, at last, I found the right nurse she grumbled but gave me some more forms. Although I have known many shortages I have never known one of forms. Aunt Natasha was required to certify that all her property had been returned to her *in good and due form*. In fact it was a horsehair bag with a piece of paper pinned to it listing

Young Man with a Camera

one beret, one coat, one blouse, one skirt, one purse empty, one glove left, one key, one packet of cigarettes squashed.

On seeing her belongings Aunt Natasha promptly climbed out of bed. With her long, floating moth-coloured hair, and the dirty white cotton hospital shift sticking out above her legs, thin as flamingoes', in their wrinkled pinkish beige stockings, she looked more than ever like an old actress, miscast as Desdemona. One of her stockings was torn. I made a knot in my handkerchief to remind me to buy beige thread.

Before we got out Aunt Natasha had bowed enthusiastically to so many people that I feared we were in for a busy social life in the next few weeks. Aunt Natasha likes nothing better than to have our two rooms full of people, all talking at the tops of their voices, while she adds tomatoes to the pot of slowly cooking soup. I would rather have only two or three visitors, so that when they went I would feel I knew them better than I did when they came. At school we are often told that older people are not really adapted to life today. But Aunt Natasha is, in many respects, better adapted to it than I am. The fact is, the facts of life don't shock her. Perhaps they won't shock me later. This squeamishness may be part of my age, like growing pains. I hope so.

When at last we got in the street I could see that, for all her jauntiness, Aunt Natasha wasn't feeling her best. For one thing, she made a fuss about her umbrella, saying that she'd had one *on arrival*, and if she hadn't now then the hospital must have stolen it. She became quite agitated, connecting this imaginary theft—because she left her umbrella in a tram last Christmas—with the shooting of her cousin, which took place forty years ago. Her black eye was even more striking in the street than it had been in the ward, and her hair made bulges in her dusty old beret. Luckily, there weren't many people about. It doesn't do to attract attention.

A cold wind began blowing as we stood at the trolley bus stop. Somewhere in an upper room a radio was turned on. A huge voice said something angrily and was interrupted by a blare of military music. Then there was silence.

"We really must get our radio mended," said Aunt Natasha apologetically.

Monica Stirling

"We will," I said, but I knew we couldn't afford to this month. Then, feeling suddenly exhausted by the number of things we can't afford, I said, "Look, it's cold here and you're tired, so let's try and find a droshky and then"—I put my hand in my pocket and felt the coins—"and then let's stop at the delicatessen downstairs and get some salami." Aunt Natasha loves salami.

"Do you think we could run to a bottle of beer?" she asked.

"I think so." I felt the coins again.

"I could do with a glass of beer." The way she said this made tears come into my eyes. It was such a modest want. Certain kinds of greediness seem to me beautiful. On the side of life.

"Of course," I said, "of course, you shall have *anything*—" and it was just then that the tank came down the street. It made a lot of noise and Aunt Natasha pulled me behind a lamp-post. I don't know what good we thought a lamp-post would do us. As it crashed along the tank wobbled slightly, like the giant tortoises in my nightmare. In the middle of it a man was standing, his head and shoulders visible. His face had the ferociously constipated look that often goes with uniforms, especially when the uniformed are in charge of lethal machinery. But one must never criticise young men in uniform. They don't like it and they can afford to show their dislike. So I made my stare very respectful, respectful enough I hoped for two, as you cannot look respectful with a black eye, and at last the tank was out of sight.

At the big crossroads where there are the remains of the Synagogue which the Germans burnt, I can't remember that, and of the Catholic Church, I do remember that burning, we saw a young man with a camera running as if he were being chased. He was running so fast that when he suddenly stopped Aunt Natasha and I both jumped as if a car had screeched to a standstill. Then we looked at each other.

"I'm afraid he's going to end in hospital," said Aunt Natasha, full of regret and sympathy.

"Yes . . . oh—"

The young man with the camera was facing us now. He was a very handsome young man and looked friendly. Suddenly he raised his arms, slowly and gracefully, like a conductor during slow music. The way in which he smiled made me think of music too, and the

Young Man with a Camera

camera slung round his neck swayed to and fro like the pendulum of a metronome. Aunt Natasha and I started to cross to him. As we got near we saw that there was a surprised look, as well as a gentle dreamy smile, on his face and his eyes were light grey and very clear. His arms were still curved skywards when he suddenly crumpled up and fell. We ran to him. Presently I looked from him to Aunt Natasha. Her face had a greenish tinge. When she closed his eyes I couldn't help crying. The idea that he'd *never open them again* was so horrible. Aunt Natasha put one arm round me and one round the young man with the camera.

"Nowadays even the young may be glad to rest," she said. Then she looked around the crossroads, empty except for the three of us, and said hesitantly, "Ilona darling . . . don't you think something unusual may be happening?"

I nodded. She sighed. "And something unusual's usually bad," she said.

Before leaving the young man we looked in his pockets and found his identity card. He was twenty-nine years old and a journalist. There was blood beneath him now, spreading slowly, like ink in blotting-paper, and in the distance we could hear rat-tat-tat sounds. Something unusual *was* happening.

"Let's go through the park," I said. When there are riots they usually occur near the factories or the university.

Aunt Natasha took my hand. We both had cold hands. Before turning down the street we looked for the last time at the young man, lying as if asleep, alone with his camera. In the next street three men in raincoats ran past us. They carried revolvers and shouted something. We couldn't understand what they said, but their tone made us run faster. As we ran I prayed that the delicatessen might be open. Aunt Natasha looked ill. I knew they hadn't given her anything to eat in the hospital, because whenever she eats out she insists on saving a bit for me.

The park gates were half open. There was no-one beside the lake or the monkey puzzle trees, but four men wearing lettered arm-bands were carrying someone on a stretcher into the bandstand, while a girl in a nurse's cap threw music stands over the balustrade. They made small thudding sounds on the grass. When we reached the post office

Monica Stirling

square it was full of people, some of them battering against the post office doors, and all yelling. So we flattened ourselves against the wall and managed to get into Cobbler's Passage and so to our street. But it was no longer ours. It was burning. People were running in all directions like ants in an overturned ant-hill. Presently I felt my hand hurting. I looked down. Aunt Natasha and I were clutching each other's hands so closely that separating them was like prying open an oyster. I felt sick. Everything in the world suddenly seemed to be shifting, uncertain, treacherous. I've never understood why anyone should find it difficult to believe that chairs and tables are made of moving atoms because I've never known anything solid in my life, except love. And the people and animals one loves may die.

Watching the clouds of smoke, the crumbling walls, the rushing people, I had a curious feeling, almost like relief: the feeling you get when something you have dreaded happens and at least the dreading is over. Then I thought of the young man's beautiful face, and his gesture as he raised his arms above the swaying camera, and of the people who when they heard he was dead would feel as I should if I lost Aunt Natasha, the people who would put their heads down and howl, tears running into hands which are made, in my opinion, not to hold water but to hold other hands.

"Darling," I said stupidly, "oh, darling, are you all right?"

"Perfectly." But although she added, "Just as well we didn't have the radio mended in the circumstances," the tears were running down her cheeks too.

The scurrying about in all directions was stopping now. People began to stream one way, old people with bundles, women with babies, children with guns, many of them crying or shouting, others staring ahead with a blank look, their shoulders hunched up. Our janitor's child ran by, carrying a jug which smelt of petrol, and shouted over her shoulder, "Boris-looking for you-delicatessen

We rushed into the smoke that was now flowing like a river in front of the delicatessen corner and there was Boris, white hair on end, a salami sticking out of his pocket, and his face and riding boots the same shiny reddish brown.

"Natasha! Ilona! My dear children? Where were you?

Young Man with a Camera

Never mind that now ! Thank God, oh thank God you're here——” and he dragged us out of the smoke and round the corner and down by the canal, where we found his horse-box waiting. It already contained fifteen people and two horses.

As it rumbled alongside the canal, and later between snow-powdered stretches of brown furrowed land, the people in the horse-box began talking of what had happened to them, not realising just what had happened to them, so that the talk was like a collective effort to do a gigantic jigsaw puzzle. Aunt Natasha's black eye didn't look in the least odd now and she was full of praise for Boris for having brought the horses along. When he asked agonisedly *what* would have happened if he hadn't found us, Aunt Natasha said pleasedly, “Just as well I wasn't at home this morning, in the circumstances, wasn't it ? ”

“Yes, darling,” we both said, “yes, darling, it was.” But we would both have said *yes, darling* to anything she said today, we were so relieved to have her there black eye and all, all including her jaunty hung-over expression. Watching Boris pat her shoulder in the loving way he reserves for her and horses, it struck me that one of his reasons for loving Aunt Natasha is the same as one of mine—namely that he has never once done anything to her which made him wish later that he'd been nicer to her. So there was no remorse, only undiluted love.

Safe, for the time being, in the beautiful world of private life, I fell asleep, and was jolted through the darkness to my first frontier. There I woke, crying from a dream about the closed eyes of the young man with a camera, the young man whose pictures were later to help me understand what it was from which my Aunt Natasha had rescued me. But that was in another country—and by the time the young man's pictures had helped clarify the *situation*, he was only one of many whom that *situation* had killed.

In the Land of Feast or Famine

The Legend of John Hornby

BY GEORGE WHALLEY

SOME time in the summer of 1918 Inspector LaNauze of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police caught in a photograph the physical image of the man in a rare instant of repose : shock-headed, bearded, hawk-nosed, moccasined, the strong lean hands holding an illustrated catalogue. He is reading with almost insolently withdrawn concentration. The picture was taken at Fort Norman near the entrance to Great Bear Lake, or it may have been higher up the Mackenzie at Fort Simpson. What it does not show is that John Hornby is a short wiry man, little more than five feet tall ; that his eyes are intensely blue, memorable and disconcerting because vague and always (it seems) looking at something a long way away. It was ten years since he had first come into the North. Within the next five years he was to become a legend in his own lifetime.

In the first quarter of this century there were plenty of colourful characters in the North-West Territories : old Klondikers, beach-combers, remittance-men, frantic solitary men who got bushed and stayed behind, men of good family with a past and men of good family with no future, and men of no family with neither past nor future ; braggarts, ruffians, visionaries, unscrupulous men. These provided a variegated contrast to the respectable and hard-working people who were simply and quietly committed, through choice or birth, to living in an inhospitable country : grave, self-reliant Scots and Orcadians who served the interests of the great trading companies, and sometimes their own ; and morose businesslike trappers—often of Scandinavian or German stock—who wrung a living from the country dangerously, relying on skill, experience, and their dogs. Restlessness, endurance, energy, cunning are the hallmarks of the best

In the Land of Feast or Famine

of them. Against such a background the small lithe Chaplinesque figure—pathetic and endearing, with the laconic smile and piercing blue eyes—would seem slender material for the making of a legend.

But John Hornby eluded all the categories. He had no commercial or scientific ambitions, no will-o'-the wisp dream of gold or fur. His past was not notably disreputable. He was said to be wealthy—and that, at times, was about half-true. He was well-educated, a Harrovian, spoke in a soft scholarly voice, was not given to profane language, and was even suspected of being a learned man because he knew a few words of French, German, and Italian. Professionally he was not an explorer, a trapper, a prospector ; he was something of all these, but a caricature of them all. By instinct and habit he was most like a trapper, and could have been a good trapper but for his love of animals and his hatred of steel traps. He never killed except for food and even in that matter was notoriously improvident. He was not a particularly good shot with a rifle, yet managed to keep himself alive. And his name persists on the maps. The bay where he first wintered on Great Bear Lake ; the elegant canoe-passage he discovered through the confusing islands and peninsulas at the eastern end of Great Slave Lake ; the double turn in the Thelon River where he built a cabin and died—all these still bear his name. And although his name is now overshadowed by the manner of his death, he lives still in the long Northern memory.

The legend is mostly to do with Hornby's feats of strength and endurance, and with behaviour which, even in the North-West Territories, was regarded as eccentric. Stories were told of him as a young man working with the railway gangs around the Yellowhead Pass, how he would go hatless in winter, and barefoot if need arose ; and how, when he was at Onoway, he would frequently run the forty-odd miles to or from Edmonton, had once trotted fifty miles beside a horse, and on another occasion ran 100 miles from Edmonton to Athabaska Landing in under twenty-four hours for a wager of a bottle of whisky (although he was not a drinking man). It was said that he could outrun an Indian, and pack more than his own weight at a portage ; and his untiring crooked jog-trot was the despair of anybody who had the misfortune to travel with him. When the Hudson's Bay Company was celebrating its 250th anniversary, an impromptu

George Whalley

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football match was mounted at Fort Smith—with other delights—to celebrate the occasion ; and Hornby had injured his leg in the game but set off on the 300-mile canoe trip to Reliance alone, with his leg in splints. He had the reputation of fearing no man, of being crazily quixotic ; and this was illustrated by the story of his kidnapping a woman from a brutal and dangerous common-law husband, and hiding her and her two children in a furniture warehouse in Edmonton, and setting them safely on their way to England.

On the whole he preferred the company of Indians to white men, and liked to travel light. His standard outfit even for a journey of indefinite duration—he was inclined to boast—was a rifle, a fishnet, and a bag of flour. Because he despised 'white man's grub,' other men were suspicious of travelling with him ; yet it was said that he had several times kept indigent Indians alive by starving himself. Altogether his reputation for starving and for being impervious to hunger and hardships was impressive. He had even wintered once in a wolf-den south of Chipewyan when the freeze-up caught him on the way to Slave Lake. And stories more genial and fanciful were also told : how he refused to travel with any brown-eyed man ; how he had once turned up at Resolution with a group of Indians to collect Treaty Money, and would have got away with it but for his eyes ; how he knew of fabulous deposits of gold and silver but refused to form a company for fear of spoiling the country ; and how he had been the first man to bring samples of pitchblende out of Bear Lake.

Many of these legendary stories about Hornby had some root in fact ; but they suffered accretion and transmutation in passing from one story-teller to another ; for heroic elaboration of the truth is one of the chief forms of emotional release in the North, and a good story travels quickly. The story of the pitchblende, for example, has no reliable basis ; the myth-making faculty, here as elsewhere, had fused some genuine piece of Hornby lore with detail from other men's stories. Hornby did not deliberately manufacture or distort his own legend ; but he was too human to destroy it, and intelligent enough to understand the rhetorical force of deftly managed silences. He delighted in providing his few friends with a fund of outrageous stories about himself. To gain his effect, elaboration was seldom necessary.

Consider the Arden story, for example. Not many weeks before

In the Land of Feast or Famine

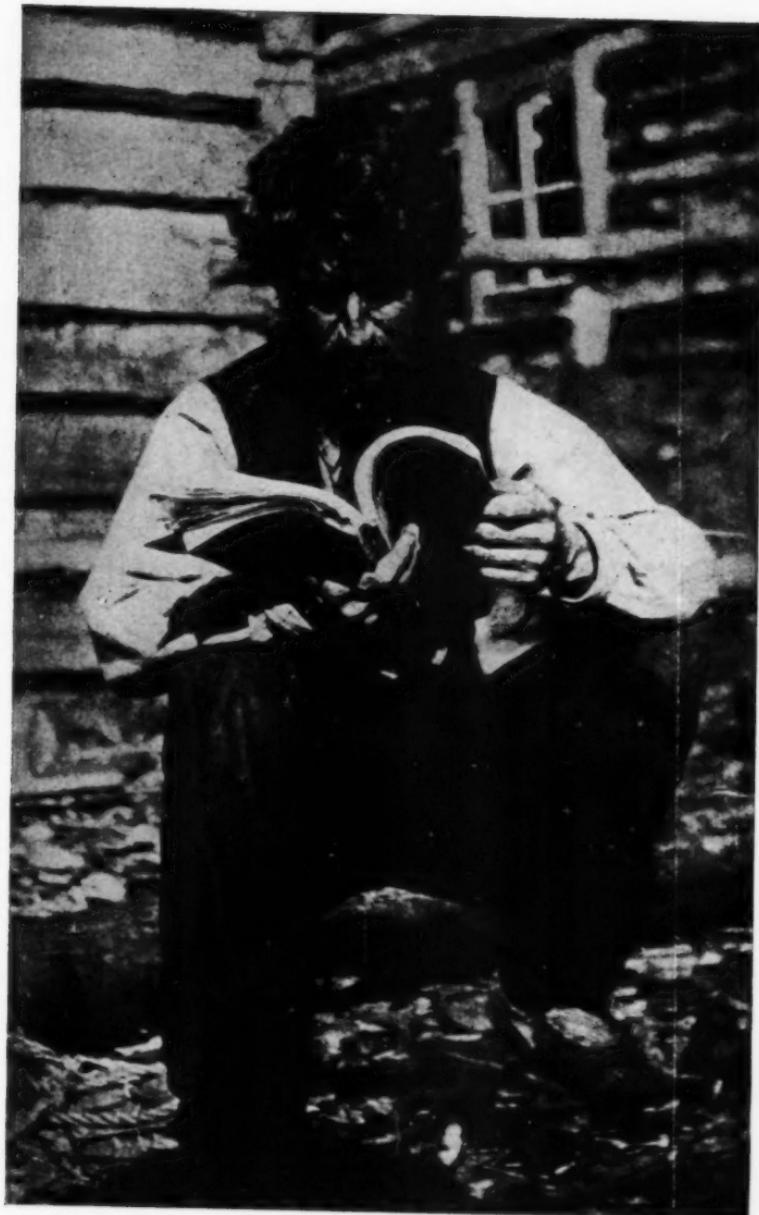
Denny LaNauze took the photograph, Hornby had been 'rescued' by a young Englishman named D'Arcy Arden. Arden lives in Yellowknife now and tells the story himself. "That was in the winter of 1917-18. I was at Dease Bay and Jack had come through from Norman and went straight on to his old house on Hornby Bay. I visited him early in the winter and found him half-starving. There were moose almost within rifle-shot of his cabin ; but he insisted that winter on doing all his hunting with a small-bore pistol. He said he was all right and there were Indians there, so I went back to Dease Bay. Later in the winter an Indian named Bay-u-Na brought back a dog I had given Hornby. It was a very fine dog and I told him not to give him to the Indians ; now the dog was almost starved to death. So Pat Klinkenberg and I took a dog-team with food to Hornby Bay. We saw plenty of caribou on the way ; but Jack had no food except some old fish-bait. He had lost most of his stove-pipe through a fish-hole in the ice earlier in the season. His cabin stove therefore was propped up several feet off the floor so that what was left of the stove-pipe would go through the roof. We had a lot of trouble persuading him to come back with us : he said he was all right and didn't need company. But he came in the end."

There were other reasons why Hornby did not want to go back with Arden, even if it did mean a warm house and plentiful food. For Dease Bay was the headquarters of his own earlier empire, his natural home, and Arden the usurping monarch. Hornby's own account of that winter is less amusing than Arden's. The Indians with him had starved, and he fed them staples until there were none left. He crippled his leg with an axe and for some time 'could only crawl about my business.' The Indians left him and no doubt he would have died if Arden had not intervened. We have Arden's story of the pistol and the stove-pipe. It is some measure of Hornby's reticence and bitterness that Arden did not know the rest of the story. For Hornby had been away from Bear Lake for three years serving in the Army in France, had been decorated, then severely wounded, and discharged 'on account of ill-health caused by wounds.' Like a wounded animal finding a quiet place to die, he had turned towards Great Bear Lake, setting off with practically no outfit, 'a desperate man running away from civilisation, looking like death, making the

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JOHN HORNBY
Taken by Denny LaNauze in North West Canada.



Sketch Map of eastern Great Slave Lake drawn by John Hornby in the schooner Ptarmigan.



N.B.S.

GENERAL INFORMATION

ROUTES FROM RESOLUTION TO RELIANCE

For large boats the best route is from Resolution to Stony Harbour to St. George's Island, over P. of Wilson's Island, through Blanchett Channel (or with guide South of Wilson's Island through Sande Hinge Channel) then either North or South of Mt. Swain's Pt. past Mr. Hinley's Pt. through Bowditch Channel & Harbour & then the South of Mr. Cleoud's Bay in about but there are no harbours to the East whilst along the North Shore Harbour everywhere.

In canoes it is best to keep the South shore passing Talcott Bay, through Pearson's Harbour's & Hornby's channel to STARK'S PORTAGE. Here there are a few inches of water flowing between Stark's Is & opposite point Twenty Yards PORTAGE.

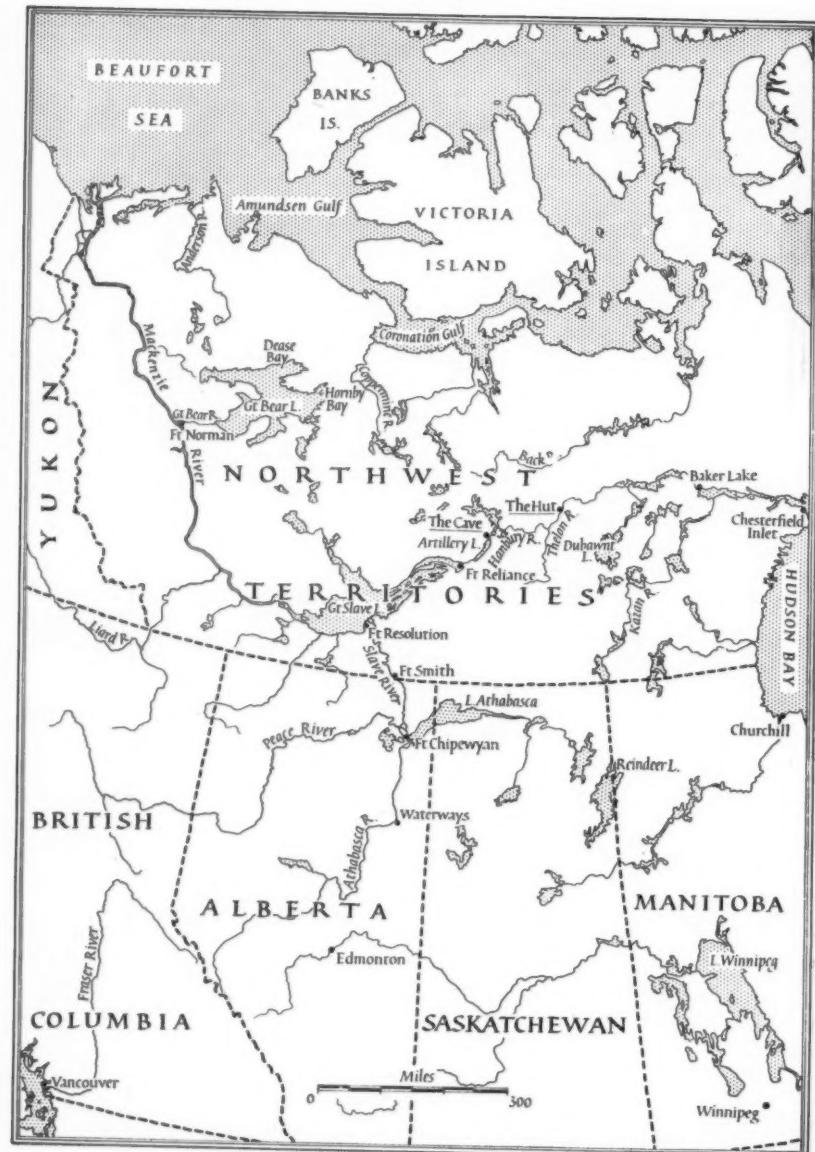
S.
Fish. N.E. of Resolution
only a few bulle
in lake but in
large herds.
large herds / salmon
in the north as far
as female salmon
April & seldom
and after its back
long the N.E. shore.
not plentiful but can
along both shores.

SCALE OF MILES.

15 30

Minerals. East of Heath Pt. no
indications of anything except
a little iron & copper.
On Wilson Is. there is a little quartz
chamotte & several claims have been
staked out which a little work has
done at Wilson's Mine.

Game-Birds. all ducks except the Scaup-Esch/Pintail-Duck) & Fish Ducks
(merganser) are scarce N.E. of Talcott River. Loons are plentiful but
extremly rare except when passing. Game-Birds plentiful Michigan plenty still in numbers.
Fish. Coquille (concho) odd caught near Heath Pt but Trout & Whitefish are common
plentiful & also in places Banks Suckling, Rock-Fish & Lake-Roll.



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George Whalley

tremendous trip in a little boat no better than a broken-down packing-case.' Alone and ill he managed the journey of more than 1100 miles, escaped drowning more than once, and arrived at Dease Bay 'with a much depleted outfit' to find many changes. It was no homecoming. He felt deep affection for the Sastudene Indians that he had brought from Norman years before back to their ancestral caribou-grounds; these gentle, guileless, still unspoiled people matched his own temperament. Now D'Arcy Arden held among them the position Hornby had held before. The gear Hornby had left in his cabin was destroyed or stolen; the cabin near the Dismal Lakes had been looted and burned since the two Oblate Fathers Rouvière and Leroux had been murdered by the Eskimo; trappers had overrun the country and were working the whole area down the Coppermine to the Gulf and along the Arctic coast. His land was violated; he could no longer live there. He made his way with a few Indians, temporarily loyal, to his old base on Hornby Bay, on the edge of the Barren Ground where he had first wintered with Cosmo Melvill in 1908. Even after the Arden rescue, he spent one more desolate winter there, and nearly died of it; then left Great Bear Lake never to return.

By 1923 the legend had reached Edmonton. Whenever he came 'outside' he could usually be seen in the King Edward Hotel, his weather-beaten clean-shaven face and almost conventional dress an intriguing contrast to the lurid stories that were told about him. From Bear Lake he had turned to the east end of Great Slave Lake, and twice had nearly died of starvation there. He never learned to swim: yet he had nearly drowned himself in trying to explore the torrential Talson River with an equally inexpert canoeist. Because the Barren Ground—the open shelterless tundra—is the most savage part of the North, Hornby's name became linked with the Barrens, although he had seen little of that country. One photograph shows him in winter wearing an old jacket with tattered sleeves, the trouser-knees monstrously baggy from crouching on his heels like an Eskimo at a fish-hole, his headgear a bizarre affair with strings and ear-flaps, the fruit of a succession of inspired improvisations to meet the whim or need of the moment. Another photograph shows him sitting on a large rock blissfully cracking caribou bones with an axe to get the marrow from them. Edmonton journalists—incorrigible romantics

In the Land of Feast or Famine

thirsty for sticky labels—described this as ‘John Hornby, the Hermit of the Barrens, examining scientific specimens.’ Because he was reticent and enigmatic—and not least reticent when most voluble—he was called a hermit and a mystic. Because he refused to plan, and did whatever he did with bland self-confidence, he was said to be a man of diabolical skill and dare-devil courage, a man capable of surmounting any difficulty by deft improvisation. The fact that he survived year after year did nothing to undermine the legend.

But all this, like the Arden episode, had its darker side. In the Bear Lake years before the war—the six years with Melvill and the Douglas party and the Oblate Fathers—Hornby had been content, had suffered no acute hardships, had never starved, had found satisfaction in activities which, if they lacked distinguishable rational basis, were at least appropriate to the country and its people. But it was distaste for ‘civilisation’ that had brought him to Canada at twenty-three and then taken him into the North four years later. Growing up in his Nantwich home was, he said, intolerable : all the talk was of cricket, and horses, and hunting—if this was civilisation he could not regard it very seriously. The war had sharpened and deepened all his suspicions. He had had to use his hunter’s skill to murder men. The world had run wild ; civilisation was in a suicidal state of decay, and all its ways were unclean. And even when he had placed the length of the Mackenzie River and the breadth of Bear Lake between himself and civilisation he had found fresh bitterness, a shattering desolation. He had been amiable, gregarious, amenable before ; suddenly he becomes solitary, resentful, inscrutable. Casual observers sometimes thought him mad ; perhaps he was from time to time. In the winter of 1920-1 (the first starving winter near the ruins of Back’s old Fort Reliance) he had written in his diary :

‘At times this life appears strange. I never see anyone, no longer have anything to read, and my pencil is too small to let me do much writing. It is not surprising that men go mad. I have long been *mentis non compos*. . . . Unquestionably my mind has become somewhat vacant, for there is nothing to sharpen the intellect. . . . It is very easy to lie down and give up, but an entirely different matter to bestir oneself and move about.’

George Whalley

After the war his travels had become more and more arduous : not that he went to more inaccessible places, but that he took no pains to avoid discomfort and disaster. Hardships and starvation seemed to take on a positive value, as though they were the only substantial values left for him, as though an ascetic or masochistic spirit were driving him to some impossible consummation with the country he loved. He courted death because he did not fear death. He went into the North alone and with little provision, because he loved the unfenced land to the point of obsession and felt that any other approach defied the integrity of the land. If he was deliberately seeking death he had many opportunities to gratify such a wish. But his supreme self-confidence allowed him to do impossible things as a child would do them—without bravado, absent-mindedly, without delight in skill. His exploits were feats of endurance, miracles of survival. Yet he was no daredevil : his mind did not deal in calculated risks. You either got through or you didn't. If you ignored pain and hunger and exhaustion, the issues were horribly simple : as long as you weren't dead you were alive, and some last tendril of the will-to-live could cling to the most improbable surfaces. What some men will suffer to make a living or a fortune or a reputation, or to extend the limits of knowledge or to alleviate the human condition, Hornby endured continuously, alone, without encouragement, for no reason that anybody could see. He got into predicaments that nobody else would have courted ; but he survived them as nobody could have been expected to survive.

As long as he travelled alone—which he almost invariably did from choice—his eccentricities were harmless enough. Oldtimers and trappers who knew and liked him never mistook him for a Superman of the North. Anybody who did was in danger. Bullock's adventure with Hornby in 1924-5 is particularly interesting : Bullock was the only man who ever acted on the assumption that the Hornby Legend was true, and survived.



Malcolm Waldron in his book called *Snow Man* gives a touching account of the first meeting between Hornby and Bullock : he had the story from Bullock. Like most of Hornby's memorable meetings,

In the Land of Feast or Famine

this took place in an Edmonton hotel. James Charles Critchell-Bullock, at twenty-five, had just retired from the Indian Army after five years' service and somehow or other had wound up, with the remnant of an inherited annuity, in Edmonton in search of some new way of life. Amazed at the small commanding figure that Hornby cut, and by the precision and softness of his voice, Bullock advanced without introduction to congratulate the little stranger upon his uncorrupted English accent. Hornby, eighteen years older than Bullock, was not embarrassed by this affront. "Harrow," he murmured. "Sherborne," said Bullock in reply. And that was the beginning of a lifelong friendship—or almost.

Bullock quickly found out who Hornby was; almost anybody in the lobby could tell him some part of the legend. As their acquaintance grew, he disclosed his state of mind to the famous man. He was weary of the ways of the world and wanted to do something bold and clean—anything, no matter how dangerous, so that it took him into the Far North. Hornby listened quizzically and patiently, and replied ambiguously. Did Bullock realise how hard life was in the North? Bullock, six foot two and proud of his physique, replied that he reckoned he could stand any hardships. So they made a short, inconclusive, and unnecessarily strenuous trial run into the Mount Coleman country. Hornby talked a good deal on that trip and gave Bullock the impression that he would like him to be his biographer. Thereafter Bullock collected a quantity of information about Hornby, some of it unique but much of it unverified and inaccurate. Bullock wrote elatedly to his brother: 'Hornby is a wonder man—can go off into the blue goodness knows where with half a dog, a couple of fish, and only the clothes he stands up in.' A trip into the North with Jack Hornby was 'on'; and Bullock started to prepare himself for it by eating raw fish and going bare-headed in cold weather. He also began, with his own money, to make elaborate preparations under the fantastic belief that what Hornby called a 'trip' was what Bullock would call an 'expedition.'

The diverting preliminaries to the Hornby-Bullock expedition are too intricate to be rehearsed here. Temperamentally two men could not have been worse assorted. Bullock's idea was that he would be the first man to winter on the Barrens and to take meteorological

George Whalley

observations there ; he would also be the first man to take motion pictures of the rare and almost extinct musk-oxen in their natural habitat. In Hornby's absence he laid in equipment consonant with such ambitions, had a little instruction in meteorology and geology, and wrote some preposterous letters to the North-West Territories and Yukon Branch in Ottawa seeking support and encouragement. Hornby withdrew to England, cancelled the expedition by cable, then returned, looked up Bullock almost (it seems) by accident, shouted with laughter when he saw all the gear Bullock had collected, and agreed with puckish ambiguity to go with him to the east of Slave Lake—not that he approved of the scheme but because he could not bear to think of a greenhorn 'messing about in my country.' He promised to meet Bullock at Fort Resolution on an agreed date and turned up six weeks late ; by which time Bullock was having trouble with his hired hand and wondering whether they would get to their destination before the freeze-up. When Hornby arrived, Bullock got his first severe shock. Hornby had brought four trapper friends with him and gaily introduced them. They were all coming. Wouldn't that be fun, he said. Bullock fumed and sulked ; but Hornby showed him then and later, obliquely but without qualification, that Hornby not Bullock was in charge of the party.

The legend, on very slender evidence, had linked Hornby's name with the Barrens. It was the thought of wintering on the Barrens, and of gaining some notoriety thereby, that had seized upon Bullock's imagination. The half-million square miles of Canadian tundra were a no-man's-land that called out—like other desolate places—for a small devoted élite ; among these Bullock longed to be numbered. The Athabaskans call that country *De-chin-u-way* : no trees. Samuel Hearne had given it the haunting name of The Barren Ground, a name still preferred by purists to the more colloquial term 'Barrens.' The northernmost limit of tress—the Timber Line—almost reaches the Arctic coast 150 miles east of the Mackenzie Delta. From there it runs south-easterly to the northern tip of Great Bear Lake and crosses the Arctic Circle about 100 miles to the eastward. Tongues of small timber run northerly up the river-valleys—the Coppermine particularly ; but the line trends steadily south-east in a slight curve, crossing Artillery Lake east of Great Slave, and meeting Hudson Bay at

In the Land of Feast or Famine

Churchill. Beyond the Timber Line is the Barren Ground: open rolling plains eroded by wind and frost, broken by soft ridges, ground down by the ice-cap into slashes of lake and muskeg, scoured out in long striations; for the few weeks of summer, a blaze of flowers and brilliant lichens, and the haunt of drab butterflies and—the worst enemy—blackflies and mosquitoes; and a terrible desolation in winter when there is no shelter anywhere from the winds. In the stillness the temperature may drop to 60 degrees below zero. And the sky is a vast commanding presence there as it is at sea. The only features are the eskers, the long gravel ridges—sometimes looking like railway embankments—dropped by the receding ice-cap. The lifeblood of that country is the caribou migrations. Back and forth from the timber to the Barren Ground the caribou range in an unpredictable rhythmic life-flow: splay-footed, deer-legged, antlered creatures, wonderful swimmers. They are food and clothing. ‘They are like ghosts,’ runs an old Indian saying; ‘they come from nowhere, fill up all the land, then disappear.’ A season when ‘the caribou did not come’ is a black season; much misery, many deaths.

The party of eight made a quick passage of Slave Lake. There were more shocks for Bullock here too. First Hornby insisted that Bullock leave his hired man and wife behind in one of his old cabins, then he made a cache of all Bullock’s cherished gear, allowing him to keep only a couple of cameras and a typewriter. It was, he pointed out, rather a lot of gear to take over a 25-mile portage; and when Bullock protested about the waste of such expensive equipment, Hornby asked whether money was really of any ultimate importance. Bullock sulked all the way over Pike’s Portage. But the winter caught them when they had scarcely entered Artillery Lake and Bullock could no longer indulge the luxury of wounded feelings. Two of the trappers built a cabin just inside the timber; the other two built a stone dug-out nearer the head of the lake, later replacing it with a cabin a little to the southward. Hornby and Bullock went on into the Barrens, some six miles north of the head of the lake, and dug a cave in the top of an esker. The dwelling, when finished, was 7 by 10 feet, with nominal headroom of 6 feet. The whole cave had to be revetted inside with spruce-brush and ground-willow, and caulked with moss to keep the sand out. The roof was supported by thirty green poles no bigger than

George Whalley

an inch and a half in diameter, and the whole loaded with a heavy layer of sand. 'It is comfortable,' Bullock wrote at first, 'except for there being sand in everything.' But the roof creaked dangerously and Hornby brought more wood from the south—the first instalment of a network of small crooked poles that grew in the pure fantasy of improvisation, never quite keeping the sand at bay, and in the end making movement in the cave almost impossible. A detail that Hornby had probably not overlooked was that he stood five foot two and was nimble on his feet; Bullock stood six foot two and though proud of his physique lived up to his name very well.

If one supposed that wintering in the Barren Ground in the grand manner was their objective, one would have expected them to settle down to a winter of stoical endurance, the trappers acting as a support party in case of need. Bullock hoped that that would be the case; but Hornby had no such intention. Indeed the winter was devoted to trapping—the only occasion when Hornby is known to have trapped seriously—probably because fur was the only way of offsetting Bullock's large and ill-considered outlay. After only five days in the cave, Bullock wrote: 'Our discomforts are certainly appalling, almost squalid. Poor Hornby is becoming daily more untidy. His only care is in setting traps, cutting up meat, and chasing and talking about caribou.' A few days later he found Hornby 'too communistic —this rich and poor stuff gets me.' When he tried to argue Hornby into good conservative sense, Hornby would open a book and start reading.

Bullock had hoped for something more romantic; but their longest continuous period in the cave was a month—and even then there were interruptions, usually at five-day intervals, when Hornby through restlessness or in self-defence would withdraw to the trapper's place for a couple of days. Bullock was too inexperienced to travel far alone in winter, and at first kept to the cave as headquarters; but both spent a good deal of time with the trappers. In the cave everything offended Bullock's fastidious nature like a cold blast on a raw nerve. They argued about the Battle of the Somme, about religion, about money, about table manners, about books, about how to write diaries. Hornby's pocket-knife exasperated Bullock. Bullock remonstrated; for a day or two they were 'not particularly communicative'; but

In the Land of Feast or Famine

Hornby went on using his knife exactly as before. 'I loathe skinning foxes on my bed,' Bullock wrote again. 'Blood everywhere—sand everywhere—' and as a romantic pre-Hemingway afterthought—'Blood and Sand.' But there was nowhere else. And when Hornby would vanish for a day or two, Bullock would heave a sigh of relief, tidy up the cave, get out his typewriter, and write long self-communing letters that he never posted but once tried to publish. For a time he busied himself with trapping and hunting—and they were never short of food—but the hallucinatory solitude bothered him. One day he contemplated suicide because he could find no shadow on the snow. His humiliation was complete. From January onwards, whenever he was alone in the cave, his apathy increased, his attention relaxed, he slept for dangerously long periods.

Once in the middle of December Hornby collapsed outside the cave, either from poisoning or from a heart attack. Bullock stumbled over him in the dark, dragged him into the cave, and nursed him for two days and nights expecting him to die. Then Hornby sat up and demanded food and never referred to the incident again. Twice Hornby went out to Reliance for stores and ostentatiously neglected to bring back the meteorological instruments Bullock wanted. At Christmas, Hornby left Bullock alone in the cave. Wood ran out; Bullock wrote some long heroic passages in his diary and finally, when he found his beard freezing to his sleeping-bag, set off for the nearest trapper's shack, in a blizzard, led by a dog with a frost-bitten and gangrenous paw. He suffered the crowning insult to his eloquence by surviving the journey. But the dangers were real enough.

The most notorious incident was the arrival of a Mounted Police patrol on All Fool's Day 1925. On the second trip to Reliance Hornby was asked by Bullock's hired man whether it was true, as Indian rumour had it, that Bullock was insane. Hornby loved a mystery and had plenty of reason to feel concern for Bullock's deterioration; he replied impatiently that 'The police had better come and see for themselves.' By the time the patrol arrived from Resolution, the days were lengthening out again, the trappers were counting their skins and thinking of pulling out, and Bullock was delightedly busying himself with his cameras. The police were greatly impressed with the squalor of the cave, but after sizing up Bullock and hearing

George Whalley

Hornby's story decided that, although Bullock didn't seem a very suitable person for Northern travel, he was not dangerously insane.

The police left and the trappers set off for Resolution, and Bullock made a journey alone with dogs—as he had longed to do all winter—to Reliance to settle with his man and say goodbye to his expensive gear now to be abandoned ; and injured his back on the return journey travelling through a wet spring blizzard. When he reached the cave the spring thaw was well advanced and the squalor of the cave indescribable. Hornby was burning old clothes for lack of fuel. So they demolished the rickety structure, dumped all the loathsome garbage of the winter into the pit and set it afire. The winter was over, with no solid accomplishment, no genuine heroism. But they had taken 353 white foxes, the skins worth at least \$10,000. And they had got through the winter without killing each other.

The journey out was another marvel—of confused purpose and futile hardship. If they were to take the Thelon route to the east—as Hornby was determined despite the contrary advice of the police—they could only do it safely by travelling light. If they wanted to be sure of the furs, a 600-mile journey through poorly mapped country was whimsical security. But Hornby had not yet made the observations he had promised to make for the Government, and Bullock had not yet filmed the musk-oxen—his last shred of self-respect : and these jobs could only be performed on the Thelon. So they settled for the Thelon. Through the early days of May they eyed the fickle weather, trying to keep their smouldering tempers under control, while they sorted and weeded out their accumulation of gear and skins, and threw away whatever they could—including much food—and still could not get their load much below a ton. At two-thirty on the morning of 12 May they finally set off with all this, and two canoes, precariously mounted on one toboggan, four dogs and two men hauling ; and pulled their hearts out, packing and double-packing and manhauling, to shift it all two miles in that first day.

The Hanbury River—the northern branch of the Thelon—starts as an imperceptible current running northerly through a vertiginous confusion of lakes and standing water east of Artillery Lake. Hornby knew that once they were into the Hanbury they would have a straight run—except for portages—into the Thelon. Instead of taking the

In the Land of Feast or Famine

classic northerly route into the Hanbury, he decided to travel due east until he struck Campbell Lake (which is actually much farther to the south) and pick up the Hanbury from there. He had no accurate map. One of Hornby's most endearing qualities—and his most dangerous—was his bland disregard for brute fact. His favourite reply to an insuperable difficulty was 'What does it matter?' Now that the thaw had started, and the ice was not out of the lakes, he would travel by sled at night when the ground and snow would be frozen. He reckoned that they could make 200 miles in five days. There were obstacles to this spirited plan : their prodigious load, Bullock's injured back, the lack of night-frost, then a very heavy fall of wet snow. Their progress was pitifully slow. And when they struck what they thought was Campbell Lake, having travelled fifteen miles in twelve days, they were completely lost for a fortnight ; and in any case the condition of the lake and the land prevented travel of any sort. Hornby, reconnoitring far to the North, eventually found the Hanbury by the simple expedient of dropping bannock crumbs in the water. Once into the Hanbury they made better time. But when, at one o'clock on the morning of 23 July, they ran out of the Hanbury into the Thelon, they had travelled 150 miles in seventy-two days ; and even this speed had been achieved by taking unnecessary risks in running rapids single-handed in laden canoes. They still had 400 miles to go.

At the junction of the Hanbury and Thelon they stopped for a few days to photograph musk-oxen and ran through a large caribou migration. Refreshed and well-fed, they made forty miles the first day under way. Then Bullock nearly amputated several toes with an axe. For a day he kept going, then collapsed. Hornby, who had borne the burden of most of the portaging, was in nearly as bad condition as Bullock. In the summer heat their stock of meat suddenly went bad. Two of their dogs had run away ; one had had to be shot ; now they shot the last one. Somehow they rallied and went on, sometimes living off trout and 'poor' caribou, but most of the time feeble and half-starved. Two or three times they narrowly escaped drowning in the rapids. But towards the end of the journey they travelled 260 miles in twenty-six days on thirteen of which bad weather prevented them from moving.

George Whalley

On the afternoon of 27 August they pulled out of the Thelon into Baker Lake and sighted the cluster of buildings to the north-east—the Révillon Frères post. According to Northern custom, they tidied themselves as best they could, and paddled across to the post. Somebody at the landing stage, startled by the bewhiskered filth of the two men in the canoes, asked where the hell they had come from. "Edmonton," said Hornby.

From their winter-quarters to Baker Lake they had travelled 535 miles in 107 days : a feat of endurance perhaps, an act of folly certainly, but not a notable journey by any rudimentary standard of judgment or skill. The only remarkable thing about it is that they survived. As a final merry quip of fortune, they found that all the furs, imperfectly cleaned in the dark cave and in the rapid thaw, had spoiled on the journey and were worthless. With remarkable prescience Bullock had written his epitaph on this journey after only a few days in the cave on the Barrens : 'With Hornby one travels by hook or crook. The greatest distance with the minimum of comfort, a maximum of energy expended with often least accomplished.'

Hornby's parting shot—an aside written in his characteristic elliptical style in his report on the caribou written in Ottawa in November 1925—is much more light-hearted : 'The day of hardship and exploration in the Arctic regions is now a thing of the past. One can realise what difficulties and hardships were to be met with [in earlier days]. Now the routes are mapped, transportation is easy and instead of months it is only a question of days [to get anywhere]. Previously it was the explorer [who travelled this country], now it will be the American tourist.' 'I intend,' he said, 'to retire from active life and become only an arm-chair critic'; and because his father was mortally ill he returned to England at the turn of the year.



Hornby still had hankерings for 'one more trip.' He had discussed this with Bullock ; but by the time they had extricated themselves from Hudson Bay, made Newfoundland in a little trading vessel, and parted in Ottawa Bullock had had enough. Apart from anything else, Bullock had lost all his money and Hornby had scarcely reached England when the first of a series of cables from Bullock arrived

In the Land of Feast or Famine

demanding funds. Some authorities have said that if it had not been for these cables, Hornby would never have gone into the North again ; that he went back to ' settle ' with Bullock. But even when he went back to Canada he made no attempt to find Bullock (who was then in New York in straitened circumstances). All the evidence shows that he could never have come to rest in Nantwich—or indeed anywhere else in ' civilisation.'

He seemed now, after so many solitary travels, to want a companion ; and he found an eager and devoted hero-worshipper in his young cousin Edgar Christian, a boy of sixteen who had just finished school and was thinking of emigrating to South Africa. His father, a distinguished professional soldier, readily agreed that to make a journey into the North with Hornby would be a priceless opportunity for the boy before coming to grips with the troubled world of the middle twenties. In the winter of 1926 Hornby's reminiscent talk—one imagines—flowed compellingly. He would sit forward, at once alert and indolent, gazing into the fire ; and you would swear he was sitting by a campfire on one of the eastern islands of Great Slave Lake. He talked perhaps about the spell of the Barren Ground and of the Upper Thelon ; of how few men had really penetrated beyond the timber, and how—though he had seen only threads of that country—he knew it perhaps better than any man. He talked about the fur-animals, and the lakes and rivers teeming with great salmon ; and how the caribou at migration moved in solid bands of thousands—millions perhaps—their eyes glazed, their hooves grinding the ice to fine powder, the air shaking with their bemused grunting, crowding each other to death in the rapids and at shallow river-crossings. Some day he would write a book about the country and his travels and all he had learned : it was to be called *In the Land of Feast or Famine*. He had made several starts at it and now had much of the material collected. More interesting things kept interrupting this intention ; but this winter on the Thelon he was going to take things easy, and writing his book would give him something to do in the dark hours.

What Colonel Christian could not know—and there was probably nobody in England who could have told him—was that Hornby, for all his fabulous experience and rhapsodic talk, was an extremely dangerous man to travel with. He refused to plan ; he had never

George Whalley

shown any organizing ability or forethought ; the trip with Bullock shows that his humour could run to grim, even cynical, extremes ; his judgment, focused continually upon the present, was seriously distorted because he rejected—as manifestations of the ‘civilisation’ he loathed—everything that thought, analysis, skill, and purpose could add to the purely animal business of Northern living. He had never yet had any clear purpose to give shape or direction to his activities. And although this may in some way be admirable, as an absent-minded return to primordial existence, it was a precarious enough thread to hang anybody else’s life on. His earliest travels are the pottings of a man in love with the country ; after the war an element of melodrama enters ; the Bullock episode was macabre comedy. Everything shows that Hornby was a gentle-hearted man who shrank from the suffering of animals and would not willingly have harmed anybody he loved or respected. Yet he was intensely self-preoccupied, isolated in a world which was nobody else’s world. And the next and final episode was tragedy—a tragedy of which Hornby was the instrument but in which Edgar Christian was the protagonist.

In April 1926 Hornby landed in Montreal with Edgar Christian. Both were in holiday mood and Edgar wrote home to say that in Montreal they had met a man who told him he was ‘with one of Canada’s best and anybody who is with J. Hornby can never go wrong.’ What Edgar did not understand, because his admiration would not let him see it, was that Hornby’s friends were appalled at the prospect of Hornby taking the boy into the North. It was one thing for Hornby to survive incredible privations alone : the addition of one ineffective hunter to the party could destroy the infinitesimal margin that Hornby always operated on. In Ottawa, in Toronto, in Winnipeg, in Edmonton, wherever they stopped on their trip westward—different people tried to dissuade Hornby and warn Christian. But neither would listen. The record of one of these warnings is preserved. ‘In the spring of 1926 Hornby cabled me in Ottawa that he was on his way and presently arrived with Edgar Christian. He was full of plans to winter far out on the Barrens where no trapper had been before and trap white foxes. I tried to persuade him that this was a *summer* breeding ground but not a winter range, that there would be no fish in the Thelon and that the caribou pass through in

In the Land of Feast or Famine

the autumn and late spring only. He did not argue but put on his puckish grin : he knew better. Christian resented any question of Jack's knowledge and ability. Again in Edmonton we talked about it, then I left for the North. I was at Fort Chipewyan when Hornby and the two boys arrived by canoe. I tried to persuade him to join me with Christian on my exploration of the Upper Dubawnt, but Hornby was determined to make a final journey down the Thelon and then give up northern travel.'

In Edmonton Hornby had run into Harold Adlard, a retired English Air Force man of twenty-six whom Hornby had declined to take on the Bullock trip. Adlard had never been farther north than Onoway. But now Hornby said he would redeem his promise and take him into the North. Edgar was perhaps jealous at first but also a little cheered that there should be another greenhorn in the party besides himself. From Fort Smith he wrote home final words of encouragement. 'Don't get worried about me because I am as safe as a house with Jack. . . . I have seen lots of trappers who have been on the trail with Jack and many won't go again because he is too tough, although they like [him] more than any man. I shall be with someone whose name runs through Canada with highest praise which makes me feel absolutely satisfied about the future.'

And they disappeared into country where there were not even Indians.



One of the last men to see the party travelling eastward in their big square-sterned canoe was an Artillery Lake trapper named Jim Cooley. He endears himself to memory because he always travelled into his trapping country in an impeccable suit of blue serge and a dove-grey Stetson.

"Sure," he told an *Edmonton Journal* reporter, "I met him myself near Reliance. It's quite true that they didn't have much grub, but then, Jack Hornby could go farther on a diet of snow, air and scenery than a Lizzie can go on twenty gallons of gas. . . . While Hornby is fond of taking chances and does many things that look crazy to the ordinary individual, he has made trips which will be talked about for years around northern campfires. He has reduced the business of living off the country to a science."

George Whalley

Jim Cooley did not know his man well : he was merely repeating the legend in his own vivacious style. Hornby had reduced nothing to a science. And the story of his last journey is distressingly straightforward, as we have it in the grim ingenuous record written by Edgar Christian throughout the seven and a half months it took him and his two companions to die of starvation.

For Edgar Christian the traverse of Great Slave Lake was full of wonder. At Reliance they were held up by ice, but presently made their way over Pike's Portage, into Artillery Lake, and by Hanbury's route into the Thelon. Hornby knew where he was going : he had chosen the exact spot the year before and pointed it out to Bullock. It was about 300 miles from Reliance, in one of the few sizable stands of spruce timber of the Thelon. But for no intelligible reason he travelled slowly—'from laziness' he said in one of the notes left in a cairn for the Artillery Lake trappers—reached his destination very late in the season and missed the southward migration of caribou that their lives would depend upon. They were late in getting a cabin started, and the temperature was ten below zero before they had finished it. By the end of December their position was becoming desperate : even Edgar Christian could see that.

Without dogs there was no hope of retreating westward or of advancing eastward. Hornby had starved before and was not unduly alarmed. But he was on the move all the time, remorselessly, in all weathers. For many hours at a time he would range the Barrens that lay just beyond the protecting screen of trees, or watch with binoculars from a ridge-top for a sight of caribou. He set traps for animals, and nets for birds ; and even at night, in bitter temperatures, he would spend hours clearing and setting and hauling the fishnet through the ice on the river. There seemed no limit to his physical endurance, and he was incorrigibly cheerful. If sheer expenditure of effort, and dogged defiance, could have fed the party, they would have fared handsomely ; but Hornby's rifle seldom killed anything. The others helped as best they could. Edgar Christian was no hunter, and once he started to starve could not endure the cold. For lack of caribou their clothing was inadequate. They saved for Christmas dinner a caribou head—a notable Northern delicacy. Thereafter they took little but a few small animals and some fish ; never much, never

In the Land of Feast or Famine

enough to last. Adlard, greenhorn though he was, learned quickly, and soon proved himself a good shot and a tenacious hunter ; but he got severely frostbitten bringing in the last caribou they shot early in February and had to keep to the cabin for almost a month ; otherwise he might have saved the whole party.

They clawed their way through the first two months of the year. At the end of February Hornby realised that he must make a final effort for caribou before he was completely incapacitated ; for his old wounds were now causing him intense pain. They hunted for ten days in the open and took nothing ; and when they returned exhausted to the cabin they found the tracks of caribou that had passed near the house. They saw caribou only twice after that, and were too feeble by then to hunt them.

Ever since Christmas Hornby had been behaving as though he understood very clearly how serious their condition was. He had now driven himself beyond even the limits of his own endurance in his efforts to find food. But he continued to make light of the situation and in late March read to his companions part of the diary of the terrible winter of 1920-1 to show that conditions could be even worse and still not be fatal. Christian noted that now, 'under similar but not severe conditions,' he could appreciate the meaning of the diary, with its laconic understatement and bleak statements of shocking fact. And Christian's own diary unwittingly shows that Hornby had been consistently denying himself in order to feed the others.

Killing an occasional bird or fish, and by digging up garbage and old fish-bait thrown out in the fall, they survived March and the year was beginning to turn. But now they were confronted by a new danger. Adlard, who had all along suffered from being shut out of the deepening intimacy between Hornby and Christian, became morose, then menacing, then on the verge of mental collapse. Seventeen days passed without their taking game of any sort. By that time Hornby was dying. For nearly a week Christian and Adlard did what they could for him, which wasn't much ; and Adlard was shocked back into sanity. Hornby told them what he could about how to look after themselves, and how to get out in the spring. In the morning of 16 April he lost consciousness, and died in the evening. His body, sewn in a canoe-sail, was placed outside the cabin door.

George Whalley

For three days Adlard devoted himself to Christian's needs, but exhausted his last reserves of strength, lingered a little, and died two weeks later.

For more than a fortnight Edgar Christian recorded, day by day, the gruesome particulars of his own solitary decline, without a flicker of emotion or self-pity. Long before Adlard died Christian had faced up to his personal predicament. There was no sign of panic. If only his crazy body could assimilate the wretched garbage he grubbed up from the snow, he could hold on indefinitely. His horizon had now shrunk to an apathetic animal search for food and his resolve 'to pull through and go out to let the world know of the last days of the finest man I have ever known.'

The sunshine was getting warmer ; he sat outside in the sun when he could, doing everything possible to regain strength. Soon the birds would be returning ; he saw a raven flying north. Then cold weather came again and heavy snow ; then the snow thawed. With the terrible remorselessness of a machine running down, his strength ebbed away. One day he discovered to his amazement that he was too weak to carry a rifle out of the house, and thereafter left two loaded rifles outside the door. Some days he had to den up, because of bad weather or sheer weakness ; he burned floor-boards and bunk-poles. Then one day he tried to go out and found he could only crawl. For the last eleven days of May the diary was silent. On the 1st of June, five days before his nineteenth birthday, he entered his diary for the last time and 'made preparations'—wrote a letter to his father and a note to his mother, placed carefully in the cold ashes of the stove the diary and letters and Hornby's will and some other letters and records, and left a note on top of the stove. He turned into his bunk and pulled a red Hudson's Bay blanket over his head. Almost the last words he wrote were : 'Please dont Blame dear Jack.'



Fourteen months after Edgar Christian died, three geologists canoeing down the Thelon noticed fresh cuttings in the wood by the riverbank. They landed and found the cabin derelict, the two bodies outside, the two loaded rifles by the door, the boy's body inside. A year later a Mounted Police patrol recovered the letters and diary

In the Land of Feast or Famine

from the stove, buried the three skeletons beside the cabin and set over them three crosses with initials cut in them, tidied the cabin in case somebody else should need to shelter there, and signed death certificates in quintuplicate. Only two parties are known to have passed the cabin since then.

When the story of Hornby's death was given to the world in 1929, Northern people, and particularly Hornby's friends and associates, were profoundly shocked. The publication of Edgar Christian's diary¹ some years later received, and still receives, the recognition it deserves. But about Hornby, although he is still a living legend, there has been almost a conspiracy of silence and genuine information about him is very hard to come by. One man will allow that Hornby was a lovable man of generous disposition and vivid personality; another will dismiss him as aimless, incompetent, irresponsible, a freak, a myth. Companionable as only an intensely lonely man can be, he had many warm acquaintances, but very few intimates—perhaps one. To his closest friends he could be as infuriating as he was endearing. For the rest, he was a man one met by accident; he moved like a bird of passage, arriving without warning, leaving without apology. With something of an animal's protective instinct, he was guilelessly ambiguous, would announce a profusion of plans and then invent at the last moment a quite new one. Without deliberate duplicity he would reveal one aspect of himself to one person, to another, another; always withdrawn, devious, unpredictable. Something vivid and fantastic about him disarmed criticism, inspired hero-worship in some, and in others affection; but others, on slight acquaintance, felt only distrust and contempt. The disaster that Hornby's death involved is a barrier almost insuperable to a sympathetic understanding. Yet the central figure in a myth or a tragedy has a stature and power that not even accurate history can confer; and he stands now with his back to a strong light.

When representations were made to the Committee on Historical Documents in 1931 that some memorial should be erected on the Thelon to commemorate John Hornby's death there, the suggestion was rejected 'inasmuch as it was the consensus of opinion that this

¹ *Unflinching*, by Edgar Christian (John Murray, 1937).

George Whalley

was not an event of sufficient national importance to receive attention in the manner suggested.' Which is one way of saying, of Hornby's life and of his death, in his own most characteristic phrase : ' What does it matter ? ' And what after all would one commemorate, beyond his vivid smile, his crazy generosity, his passionate sense of the integrity of the country, his gay and birdlike inconsequence, his childlike illogical optimism, his astonishing self-confidence, his pitiless endurance, his tragic light-hearted courage in the face of a disaster that he must have known his own levity and irresponsibility had produced, the slow merciless killing of himself to save two lives he knew he could not save ? To say that he longed for death and deliberately sought it is to miss the point. He once told Denny LaNauze that he wished he had been born an Indian. And if his philosophy could be crystallised, it would be very simple and straightforward, rather like an Indian's—something like this :

In civilisation there is no peace. Here, in the North, in my country, there *is* peace. No past, no future, no regret, no anticipation ; just doing. That is peace.

As long as he could live by himself and to himself it was perhaps an excellent philosophy.

Love Affair

BY IRA MORRIS

THE moment Father got back to Australia I knew he had had a tragedy in his life. I was only twelve years old, but I sensed an aura of tragedy about him when he stepped off the train at our provincial station and came walking towards us in his shabby waterproof coat. I mean, I knew that a real tragedy had taken place, quite apart from the failure of his trip to England or the fact that he was returning to us after two years as poor, as unsuccessful, as he had been the whole of his life. I saw that he was a beaten man.

"George! George!" shouted Mother, beginning to run down the station platform, thrusting her heavy body through the crowd. Father neither heard nor saw her. He must have known that we'd be there, yet he didn't look about for us, just ambled along with his two big suitcases, one in either hand. It wasn't till Mother was almost beside him that he noticed her, and I thought for a moment that she'd begin to scold him, the way she always used to do. Perhaps Father had the same idea. He put down his suitcases quickly, kissed Mother, then picked up Letty.

"My, what a big girl!" he said to her before he even looked at me. "And here's Conny," he said, putting his arm around my shoulders.

But he didn't try to lift me. He was a small man, so perhaps I was too heavy, although Mother lifted me often, even against my will. I could feel that big pimple on his chin against my cheek, and while I was awfully glad to see him, I hated that pimple just as much as ever.

We didn't take a taxi back from the station. Father wanted to, but Mother said, "George, remember that we're not millionaires."

So we walked through the streets of our town, Father with his

Ira Morris

suitcases and Letty and I trying to keep hold of his arms. Mother, panting as she walked, kept asking him whether he'd had a nice trip. She seemed to think that the rest of his two years' absence didn't count, the only period of importance was those last days, in which her comparative proximity almost gave her a part.

"It was a pretty good trip," said Father. "Pretty smooth, all in all. Yes, I should say it was a pretty fair trip."

"Well, can't you tell me anything about it? Didn't anything interesting happen?"

"No," Father said two or three times, "nothing special seemed to happen. It was just a pleasant sort of trip."

"You didn't come back first class, did you, Daddy?" Letty asked him. She was only eight when he left for England, so it was funny that she could remember his saying that he was going third class but coming back first. I remembered, of course, but I was older.

The first few days at home Father seemed to be trying to settle down. He kept walking about the house with his pipe in his mouth, and going out to look at the back garden. He acted about the same as ever, and yet there was a difference. Perhaps it was that he was more absent-minded, although he had always been terribly absent-minded and half the time didn't even answer when you spoke to him. No, it was more than that. He was like a dog that's been whipped too often, and too long. He didn't have any spunk left—not that he'd ever had much spunk.

It was in his quarrels with Mother that the change in him was most apparent. Formerly when she pecked at him, he used to try and strike back, pretty ineffectually of course, but he made an effort. He could get offended and stand up for his rights. Now he didn't. He just stood there and let her buzz at him until she got exhausted, then he'd walk off quietly.

I deserve anything—that was his attitude. Here I am. Kick me. Harder! Harder still! Please, everyone, kick me just as hard as you possibly can.

He stayed at home all day now. He used to have an office, but he had given it up when he sailed for England. Half the money he'd obtained for his business had gone down the spout during those two

Love Affair

years ; the other half was invested in 'gilt-edged's.' He had only one way to pass the time : to suffer.

I remember when I first learned that there had been a woman in Father's life. It was the day a letter arrived for him with the Manchester postmark. The postman gave it to me and I gave it to Father when Mother was out, but that didn't do much good. Now that I think back, I wonder if Father really cared a great deal about Mother's finding out. He even may have figured that he could suffer more adequately if she knew.

Anyway, he left the letter in a place where she was bound to find it, and that night there was a terrible to-do. Lying in my bed, I could hear everything just as though I'd been in the same room, and I understood that some woman was trying to get money out of Father.

"So you'd starve your own flesh and blood for a stranger!" was one of the things she told him. "And I suppose you'd have me believe that this is the first time? I'm not so simple!"

Father mumbled something, and then Mother raised her voice and fairly shrieked at him ; I think she even hit him with her fist. A few minutes later the door banged. When I ran to the window in my nightgown, I saw Father walking down the road in the moonlight without hat or coat, passing his hand with a kind of spasmodic movement over his almost bald, egg-shaped head.

I don't know if he sent her money that time, but it eventually came out that he used to do a good deal more than send her money ; he had actually supported this woman during a large part of his stay in England. I had no idea why Father should have wished to support a woman ; still, I overheard his own admission of the fact. What a sheep Father was ! Mother soon got him to admit everything.

It seems that he had met this Gladys on a business trip to the North of England, and after that he used to visit her. Sometimes he gave her money, but I don't believe Mother's accusations about its being Gladys's fault that his business in England had fallen through. That's ridiculous ! Father never could have succeeded anyway. You only had to look at him to be convinced of that.

In the end Father was living with Gladys all the time, not in Manchester but in London, where he'd taken a flat for both of them. But one day Gladys disappeared. Father didn't know where she'd

Ira Morris

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gone, and it wasn't till he received a letter from Manchester that he learned that she'd simply grown bored with her life in London and gone back to some man she used to know. He followed her up North and persuaded her to come back to him.

"And all that time you were deceiving me, not telling me a thing!" howled Mother, her voice piercing through the wall into our bedroom. "How dared you? I'll never forgive you for this—never!"

Father did not seem anxious to be forgiven. It was strange, though, how willing he was to speak about his past with someone whose sympathy he could not hope to gain.

"And then what?" said Mother. "What happened to your fancy woman then? I might as well hear all of it."

Father told her that Gladys lived with him two months more before she ran off with another man, selling the fur coat Father had given her to pay their way. There really must have been something about Father that tempted people to treat him badly! His only reaction this time was to retrieve the coat and send it after her. She had gone with a man she'd met in Leicester Square, and I could tell that Father didn't like him. He didn't think that he was good enough for Gladys.

"Good enough!" Mother fairly snorted. "Anything's good enough for a dirty tart like that!"

"Stop it!" Father's feelings expressed themselves in something like a squeak. "I won't have you speak of Gladys in that way. She's pure, do you understand? Some people are pure no matter what they do."

"You fool!" said Mother a little uncertainly. "Don't you see that all she wanted was your money? Now this fellow's left her, so she needs your help again."

"It's she who has left him! No one would ever want to leave Gladys," Father declared proudly.

"Oh, oh, oh! And to think of all this going on behind my back!"

Mother sounded as sorry for herself as if it was she who had been made to suffer....

Two years passed. Father became thinner and older. As I grew up, it seemed to me that the pimple on his chin got larger. At times

Love Affair

that pimple dominated his whole face. The interest on our gilt-edged securities failed to keep up our establishment ; we had to sell our house and move into a boarding-house.

One day a second letter from Manchester arrived for Father, on thick blue stationery this time. When he had read it, he walked about our two rooms with the open letter held in his hand. He kept smiling, and Letty got scared and ran downstairs. I think it was the first time either of us had ever seen him smile—really smile. It was a good thing that Mother was out, for by the time she came back Father had stopped smiling and was acting almost like himself. I made Letty promise that she wouldn't tell.

It must have been almost a month later that Father asked me if I'd like to go to Sydney. My heart leaped. I had never been outside of our provincial city, except for one trip to Sydney when I was six years old. I remembered nothing at all about it ; it seemed like offering me a journey to the moon.

"If you're to go, then you must not tell anyone—not even Mother. Do you understand ?"

I nodded, and Father lowered his voice. "We leave tomorrow. I'll pack a suitcase for us both when Mother goes out shopping. Meanwhile, not a word !"

The train journey to the capital was a day's affair. Father said little all the way. Sitting by the window, we watched the telegraph wires sway up and down, up and down, as the train went past, and at mid-day we ate some sandwiches. Father seemed nervous and distract. Often he would nibble at his pale lips, or again pass his hand quickly over his head, which by now was completely bald. It wasn't till nightfall that he told me the purpose of our voyage.

"We are going to see a friend of mine tomorrow," he informed me, just before the corridor lights were switched on, while the long train was rollicking through the blue dusk of the Australian evening. "She is on her wedding trip, and the big boat on which she is travelling around the world spends the day in Sydney harbour. She has come all the way from England and"—Father's voice suddenly sounded different, sounded stronger—"she wrote that she wants to see me. She wants to meet you too. I've told her all about you."

"Is she a good friend ?" I asked after a moment's pause.

Ira Morris

Father beamed.

"She wrote me that I am the best friend she's ever had."

"She must be rich to travel about like that."

"She is now," said Father. "Her husband is a rich man."

The train drew into Sydney a little before midnight. I remember staggering down the station platform half asleep, Father leading me by the hand, and then sitting in a tramcar that clanged through the strange, crowded streets. The late performances at the cinemas were just over; fresh throngs of people were streaming out of the theatre doors. I watched them from the window through half-shut eyes. Father was standing in the aisle of the tram, one hand holding the unwieldy suitcase, the other clinging to a strap. He swayed perilously and seemed about to fall. Somehow Father always got the worst of everything.

Next morning I awoke in a narrow bed in a back room of some hotel. Father was standing by the wash-basin, carefully shaving himself with his old straight razor. My first conscious thought took the form of a wish that he would not cut his pimple; this sometimes happened when he tried to shave himself too closely, and I had known it to bleed all day. I watched him complete the operation in a state of anguish.

The arrival of the tourist boat was announced for eight o'clock, according to a poster in the hall. Father seemed terribly nervous as we taxied through the town, leaning out of the window twice to urge the driver to greater speed. He had overslept that morning, the strain of the unaccustomed journey having proved too much for him, and now it was already nine o'clock. Typically enough, he had neglected the night before to make arrangements with the clerk to awaken him.

"I want you to look nice," he said to me just before we reached the dock, and he took out his pocket comb and began to fix my hair. It was about the first time he had ever noticed my appearance, so I doubt if he made a great success of it. "You might kiss her. She's a very nice lady," he said as he passed the comb through the few thin hairs growing on his own temples. "Remember, she is my best friend."

There was the white boat lying alongside the dock, joined to it by

Love Affair

a gangplank as by an umbilical cord. Passengers were moving up and down this passageway, their movements controlled by a little cluster of officials at the landing end. Father spoke to one of these, the least imposing-looking, of course.

"What is the name of the passenger?" asked the little fat man, eyeing Father doubtfully.

Father looked back at him without answering, as if he had not understood.

"What's her name?" repeated the ship's officer.

Father got quite red in the face. His large face was usually deathly pale, but at moments of acute shame or embarrassment it could turn fiery red; even the crown of his head became red.

"I've done a very stupid thing," he muttered. "A terribly stupid thing. I've left the letter with her name behind! You see, she's just been married, and I only knew her by her maiden name. Would it do any good if I gave you that?"

"I'm afraid not," said the fat man impatiently. "Afraid I can't let you on unless you know her name."

"But surely there is something to be done," pleaded Father. "I've come all the way from—" He gave the name of our little provincial town.

"Yet you don't even know what she is called?"

Father shook his head hopelessly, and all at once that beaten, lost expression showed in his face—the expression with which he listened to Mother when she scolded him. Life was too much for him. He could offer no resistance.

In the end they showed Father the passenger list. We sat in a box of an office, built on the pier itself, and I looked at the illustrated posters on the wall, announcing forthcoming sailings to all quarters of the globe. Methodically Father went through the rows of names. He did not even know the class that she was travelling, so it proved to be a lengthy job—and a fruitless one.

Once he thought he recognised a name among the second-class passengers, and the officials let us go on the boat to investigate. We walked through the long spotless corridors, over the rubber matting into which our feet seemed to sink at every step, and after much waiting around, our guide routed out the bearer of the name. But

Ira Morris

it turned out to be an old woman with hideous features, partly crippled, and evil-tempered when she found that she had been disturbed in vain.

Father kept shaking his head, too crushed even to apologise ; the steward who had gone to all the trouble stood aside, waiting expectantly for his tip. We gave it up after that.

The boat sailed at five o'clock. We stood on the pier and watched them draw in the connecting gangplank—in a way Father's last link with the outside world. The expression on Father's face was blank ; he seemed emptied of all emotion. I doubt if he even felt disappointed at our wasted trip.

The boat began to move. A strip of black water, upon which floated a few orange peels and the lid of a paper box, appeared between its steel sides and the wooden quay. Passengers of all classes stood at the ship's railings waving and calling out goodbyes.

Abruptly Father gave a start. Without a word he left me and began running towards the other end of the pier, pushing his way roughly between groups of people. It was the only time that I ever saw him behave impolitely to anyone.

"Gladys ! " he shouted as he ran, and he waved his arm back and forth wildly. " Gladys ! "

Whether he got a response from one of the passengers I do not know. I do not even know if he had seen Gladys, if he only imagined that he had, or if there was no question of his having seen her and his cry was one of despair—a sort of death rattle.

I found him standing at the end of the pier, watching the boat manoeuvre into the bay. On that boat was something precious, something he needed and wanted, with which he was unable to establish contact.

It was there, sailing away from him.

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Four Japanese Poems

TRANSLATED BY D. J. ENRIGHT AND
TAKAMICHI NINOMIYA

HOME THOUGHTS

My home is where the warm sun shines on the Cicada River,
Where the countless birds sing on the boughs the livelong day—
On the day of the equinox, the Festival of the Dead, town-girls stroll
to the temple

And girls from Katsura, fishing the restless trout downstream,
Smell pure wine in the drops that fall from the fishing-net—a broad
spring day,

When young men row back from the cherry-viewing with the slow
sound of oars,

Talking with their loves in the shade of the young trees,
While the boy-players of the Mibu farce, with expert comic gestures,
spread laughter among them—

Let us return there, you and I.

My home is where young camphor leaves diffuse their dim perfume,
In early summer the broad-leaved oaks wave their limp arms in the
breeze,

Along the lane through the gold-green shades of the wood of Tadasu
A lacquer-shafted ox-wagon quietly moves—and there sits
The Imperial Messenger, on his way to the Hollyhock Festival,
In a court hat, adorned with a talisman twig.

Or in June, at the Gion Festival, when the sun shines white
On the roofs of the floats that creak along the city streets, flooded
with spectators—

Priests from Hiei Temple, flower-girls borne along among them . . .
Let us return there, you and I.

My home is where blown maple leaves scuttle about in November winds,
On frosty mornings in the fields of Makuzza, and some of the pious monks,
Coming to town on a halcyon Day of Congregation, are lost and homesick towards evening,
On their way back, while showers fall, wet-eyed and lonely,
In the southern outskirts—short is the day, and sad,
But the youthful votaries, absorbed in the treasure-house,
Bend over the sacred sutras, in the shade of the Buddha's dusty image,
And dream in the russet evening light of the Golden Shore beyond . . .
Let us return there; you and I.

My home is where black alders flutter their yellow leaves, in wind,
 along the path through the paddy,
Where the brown cows tread homewards to the soft singing of the country girls,
As the sun's last rays doze off in the evening, leaning afar towards
 some pagoda's spire—
There stands a tree whose leaves begin to fall—doleful as a hired mourner idly adjusting her veil,
And the moon can just be seen, casting a dreamy glance aside;
As the blue clangour of the bells begins, the pilgrims yearn for those
 they have left at home . . .
Let us return there, you and I.

KYŪKIN SUSUKIDA (1877-1945)

THE PRECIOUS MUSIC OF HERESY

I meditate upon the heresy of the degenerate age—Christianity's magical Deus;
· On the Kapitein of the Black Ship, the wonderlands of the Red-haired,
The crimson glass, the sharp-scented carnations,
The figured silk of the Southern Barbarians, and the arak, vinho tinto and the other wines . . .

Even in my dreams I see blue-eyed Dominicans, reciting their canticles,
Talking of the strange banned God, of the bloodstained Crux,
The deceitful device that shows the poppy-seeds as big as apples,
Or the flexible optical instrument through which the paradisal sky
is viewed . . .

Houses are built of stones, and the white blood of their granite,
Contained in a diamant glass jar, is said to glow at night . . .
And the visions of Electriciteit, in a fragrant smell of velvet,
Shadow forth, I learn, the quaint birds and beasts of the lunar world.

I am told that the cosmetics there are distilled from the flowers of
poisonous herbs,
And oh the image of Mary, even, is painted with putrid petrolic oil !
Moreover, the pale-coloured letters of Latin and Portuguese that run
sideways,
How full they are of sensual sounds, sweet and sad . . .

Grant us, then, enticing Reverend Fathers—
Though a hundred years were contracted into one moment, and
one should bleed to death on a cross,
What care I?—Grant us this day your secret of secrets, the exotic
carmine dream.
O Deus ! this I beg in yearning prayers that burn me, flesh and
soul . . .

HAKUSHŪ KITAHARA (1885-1942)

WERE I IN THE PROVINCE OF YAMATO

Were I in the province of Yamato, now in October . . .
I would follow a lane through the wood of Kaminabi, with its sparse-
leaved trees,
To Ikaruga, at dawn, the dew on my hair—when the tall grass
Ripples across the wide field of Heguri like a golden sea,
And the colour fades from the dusty paper-window, and the sun
is faint—

Between the wooden columns, insatiably, I peer at the golden letters
of the precious age-old scriptures,
At the ancient Korean lyre, the grey unglazed pottery and the gold
and silver paintings on the wall.
This is the Shrine of Everflowering Arts, the inner sanctuary fragrant
with burning incense,
Whose fumes intoxicate me, like an urn of nectar.

On the terraced fields along the newly opened road,
Reddish mandarine oranges glimmer between the leaves—it is midday,
When you might turn at the pleasing sound of a tranquil song
And discover a yellow warbler, hopping on a bough like a pygmy
musician—

Light of feather, hovering airily, a roaming leaf,
In the hedges and among the trees—
Can it be a spirit of the fields, disguised?
From deep in the twilit temple comes the sound of a sutra—
Hearing it, some careless stroller of old
Might have thrilled through his being . . .

The sun is low now, behind the trees, and people
Cluster quietly together in the garden of the Dream Palace,
Where dry crinkly leaves scuttle along, the leaves
Of maples, nettle-trees and broad-leaved bo-trees . . .
Silently the corridor is listening
To the murmur from the street; turning back,
You will see high pagodas, their tarnished spires dyed by the sun's last
rays,
Which the flowers too throw back—an evening scene
Recalling the old days, when Buddhist monks
Softly trailed their long robes on the ground behind them . . .
Ah, were I in the province of Yamato,
This day in October and this hour of evening,
Then for a moment at least, I should have shared
In the souls of the saints, myself!

KYŪKIN SUSUKIDA (1877-1945)

CHANCE ENCOUNTER

Halley's Comet appeared in 1910
(And I was born in the following year) :
Its period being seventy-six years and seven days,
It is due to reappear in 1986—

So I read, and my heart sinks.
It is unlikely that I shall ever see the star—
And probably the case is the same with human encounters.

An understanding mind one meets as seldom,
And an undistracted love one wins as rarely—
I know that my true friend will appear after my death,
And my sweetheart died before I was born.

KATSUMI TANAKA (b. 1911)

*These poems will be included in THE POETRY OF LIVING JAPAN
to be published shortly by John Murray*

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(ii)